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VENERABLE MOTHER

JEANNE DE MATEL.

Translated From the French
BY
REV. F. G.,
A Father of the Society of Jesus.

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VENERABLE MOTHER

JEANNE de MATEL,

FOUNDRESS OF THE ORDER OF THE
INCARNATE WORD AND THE
BLESSED SACRAMENT.

Her Life, Spirit and Works,

BY THE

ABBÉ P. G. PENAUD,

HONORARY CANON, SUPERIOR OF THE LITTLE SEMINARY AT
FELLETIN (CREUZE), AND OF THE CONVENT OF
THE INCARNATE WORD AT EVAUX.

"The Word was made of flesh and dwelt among us."
—St. John I, 14.

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BOOK FIFTH.

JEANNE DE MATEL AS FOUNDRESS.

CHAPTER I.

JEANNE DE MATEL AND THE RELIGIOUS LIFE.

In the preceding book we have seen Mother de Matel enriched with the science of contemplation, and enriched, as it were, with a heavenly aureole. These privileges were not designed by God as merely supernatural ornaments of her soul; they were, by their character and their splendor, a consecration and an authentic sign of her mission. We must then come down from those heights to which we have followed her, and study her in the religious point of view, and as a foundress.

Jeanne gives us her idea of the religious life as she had conceived it, in establishing her Order: "My intention was not to injure other religious, but to join my bark to theirs in order to bring to the safe haven of the religious life the young souls whom Thou dost take with the net of Thy grace in the sea of the world.

"They cannot escape that sea unless they are aided by other poor, simple souls, even as the fish are drawn out by the fishermen. And as these nets do not force their inclinations, they are led more to one Order than to another, God leaving them free to choose that which best pleases them."

When she describes the grace of this vocation, she makes use of the most vivid colors and the most charming figures: "The Lord Jesus came into the world to give great power to His Gospel in those who should announce and follow it; especially to those virgins who would have the courage to accept His invitation literally: "He that can receive it, let him receive it," * and become spouses of the King. He shares His treasury with them. He makes them repose on His bosom, that is whiter than ivory. It is their dovecot in which they have their nest, where they enjoy a divine repose, untroubled by the noise with which the world, the flesh and the devil seek to disturb their happiness."

In her conferences Mother de Matel willingly dwelt on this subject. She has left her daughters beautiful pages in which she exalts the privileges of virginity and the dignity of spouses of the Incarnate Word with the vigor of a Bourdaloue and the unction of a Francis of Sales. And with what fervor she comments on that title of spouse! how well she makes us feel its appropriateness and its truth. The Church has consecrated the title, and therefore it is well founded. In the spiritual nuptials of the religious life, as in earthly unions, the spouse gives herself up to the groom, and the tie is eternal, since the groom can not die: "The spouse can never regain the liberty which she has vowed to Him; what she has given up in consecrating herself, she can never take back again. One word spoken by such a virgin at her consecration has exhausted all her generosity."

On this glorious inability of the religious to resume or to increase her gift of self, Jeanne capatiates in this moving strain: "The soul that retains the

* Matt. XIX, 12.

power of making fresh gifts to the one to whom it is engaged, has, if I may so express it, only promised its fruits, reserving to itself the ownership of the tree that produces them, and thus is free to cultivate it as it wishes and to dispose of those of its products that are not included in its promise. But the virgin of whom we are speaking carries her generosity towards her beloved farther: she gives Him the tree that produces the fruit; she even deprives herself of the hope of plucking the fruit, or of deciding when it has reached maturity. May I not say that she has even deprived herself of the sweet pleasure of presenting it herself to the beloved? He has transplanted the tree with His own hand into His garden, of which He alone is master; everything that it may produce henceforth, even to its leaves and its sterile flowers, belongs to Him. He will cultivate it as He likes best; He may give to other trees near by a care which He denies to it; He may allow it to languish and wither for want of the water that would invigorate it, whilst others are refreshed at the proper times; He may scarcely look at it, or may bestow upon it only a glance of indifference or contempt. What need I say more? He may pluck the blossoms that seem to promise good fruit as though He feared that it might merit His esteem and afford Him pleasure; or He may gather the fruit before it is ripe, or leave it a prey to the insects that feed upon and spoil it. And, as though to punish it for a sterility that He has Himself caused, He may seem as though He were about to cut it down and cast it into the fire. In all this He but uses the right that He has acquired to the tree by the absolute and unrestricted gift made to Him. The only thing that remains to the donor is the desire to correspond to the wishes of his new master and to receive unresistingly the culture which He may wish to give.

"To Him, then, it belongs to dispose of your person in absolute mastership. All the good you do belongs to Him even before you offer it; it is the fruit of the tree which you have given Him, and which He permits you to gather and hand over to Him. He Himself takes it by the hand of your superior when you obey her, because she represents Him; He makes over His right to the sister who asks of you a service that you are able to render. You need not, therefore, praise yourself for your generosity, nor pretend to claim any gratitude, since it is not you who grant the favor, but He to Whom it belongs."

Jeanne says elsewhere: "When there is question of the tabernacle which the Lord may choose for His dwelling and delight, we can but be silent. It is the Holy of Holies of which that of Solomon's temple was but the shadow. It is the new heaven, the new earth of which St. John speaks in the Apocalypse.* It is the new Jerusalem which her Spouse, the Word, prepares and adorns.† And it is the temple where the God of all majesty receives the worship that is always agreeable to Him, and where the altar always smokes with an incense that arises before Him, and with which He is pleased. David desires, as a great favor, to visit the temple of the Lord, and to be the witness of His glory.‡ The virgin already enjoys this happiness; she possesses God, and is possessed by Him, and tastes with Him the pleasure conferred by the sight of divine beauty. She is the throne of Sapphire beheld by the prophet Ezekiel,§ and that which was seen by Isaiah, before which the Seraphim veiled themselves.‖ She is filled with the divine majesty. She is hidden with Jesus Christ in God."

* Apoc. XXI., 1.
† Ibid. XXI., 2.
‡ Ps. XXVI., 4.
§ Ezek. I., 26.
‖ Isaiah VI., 1.

Mother de Matel has many other charming and instructive pages on the relations of virginal souls with the Savior. We shall make a few quotations from them: "The glass of our mirrors, though well polished, often mislead us, and deceive us as to our defects; if they show us our ugliness, they do not remove it, and do not confer beauty instead. Whereas, in this divine mirror, the virgins who gaze therein are purified from all stains, and, in their contemplations, receive an admirable reflection of splendor and beauty. The more they consider themselves therein, the more beautiful they become, and the more pleasing to their Spouse, who increases their love as they grow in beauty. They have a glorious privilege, above all other saints, of gazing closely in this virginal mirror; it is a fruit which their divine Spouse confers on their integrity, and one more addition to the favors which He grants them, that they may increase in loveliness. But their beauty increasing their love, and their love doubling the attention with which they inspect the living mirror, they receive in turn regards that enlighten them by the brilliancy that is shed upon their souls, so that, between Him and them, there is a continuous reflection of reciprocal glances that make them proceed uninterruptedly from light to light."

This life is perfected only in heaven, but, commencing on earth, it already has the harmony of eternal canticles. "The supreme goodness gave me to know that the harp on which the virgins chant the canticle of the Lamb is the Heart of the Lamb—of Jesus Christ, to whom they are inseparably united. He gives them His Heart as a harp, a symbol of the Ten Commandments, which He perfectly fulfilled, as well as the counsels and intentions of Divine Love: He wishes them to imitate His fidelity. He is also

their lute, uniting with their voices in an admirable and loving accord. These hearts constitute a melodious music and a divine harmony; they unite and vibrate mutually, but the first movements spring from the Heart of Jesus."

Mother de Matel loves to represent the religious community under the apocalyptic image of the heavenly court of the Lamb. From this thought she draws vigorous doctrine concerning the good government of a convent. "The Superioress represents the Lamb; she must be a throne of the purest ivory, crowned by the rainbow, symbol of peace; to govern well she must excel in wisdom; to conduct and feed her flock she must have seven shining and abundant horns; the seven works of mercy are the horns of David; she must have seven wings, being filled with the seven gifts prefigured by the wings.

"The other four mothers represent the four symbolic creatures—the four evangelists—and are all eyes, because they must watch according to their office; they must see well that they may advise well, for the greater glory of God, and the progress of souls. They must be the four rivers that flow in the paradise of religion and water it, but they must flow from the throne of God, clear as crystal. Their spirit must be free from self-interest; God must be their all in all.

"The Assistant must be an eagle prompt in the flight of regular obedience, always gazing fixedly on the rising sun, the Superior, exciting others to obedience. The Mistress of novices must have a countenance of light and benignity to lead novices by her goodness in the path of the Lamb, Who is all sweetness and benignity.

"The Mother Procurator (the treasurer) must be prudent as the ox, and, like it, working strongly,

sacrificing her own wishes to the good of the Order, foreseeing and providing for the necessities of the house.

"As for the Mother Portress, she must be like the lion, with eyes always open to see whom she admits or dismisses, that she may be faithful to the Lamb whom the Superior represents, and that nothing may be received without her knowledge, and nothing may leave the Convent without her permission; not a letter, not a present.

"The twenty-four Elders are the twenty-four choir-sisters, clad in the whiteness of their innocence, crowned with perfect charity, faithful to the least sign of the Superior." *

Mother de Matel finds a still more admirable exemplar of the religious life. She sees its type and model in the Holy Trinity, the Incarnate Word and the Blessed Sacrament.

"Thou wast pleased to lift my spirit to Thy adorable Trinity, source, prototype and excellence of all religion and of all religious. The Father is the General, the Son the Provincial; the Father engenders, but is not engendered; He is not produced, but He produces the Holy Ghost. The Son is engendered of the Father alone, with Whom He produces, as one principle, the Holy Ghost, Who is the Guardian receiving and retaining to Himself the production of the Father and the Son. This divine Order is God. These three Persons are one divine Society, dwelling the one in the other in their divine circumsession, and in their ineffable relations; a cloister immense in its expanse, sublime in its height, infinite in its extent, abyssmal in its depth.

* First scheme of the Constitutions.

"God is in His essence a pure act; rich poverty, in which essentially and eminently is divine richness!

"The divine Father, source and origin of purity and virginity, contemplating Himself, without departing from Himself, begets eternally His Word. By the love which is common to the Father and to the Son is produced the Holy Spirit, Who embraces the Father and the Son, and is the most pure term of the virginal and divine production. O, divine virginity! O, divine fecundity! O, essential purity!

"What is here obedience is there divine liberty and excellent order. The Father has no origin save in Himself; He is the principle of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. The Son is, with the Father, the principle of the Holy Ghost. O divine Order which is unchangeable. The Father, Who is General sends the Son without dependency; the Son comes without subjection; the Holy Ghost effects the work of the Incarnation. The Son returns to heaven, and, with the Father, sends the Holy Ghost, Who, being unconstrained Love, and most free, comes of the same will by which He is sent by the Father and the Son. O, divine obedience! O, faithful fidelity! Equality well ordered, distinct procession! O, religion and religious, without parallel in eminence, source of all religion and of all religious, human and angelic!"

Continuing her contemplation, Mother de Matel passes to the mystery of the Incarnation. "O, Divine Word, what hast Thou done? A religion that represents divine religion! Thou comest to take a body and soul in a virginal manner, in poverty and obedience. Thou art the Word incarnate, with the concurrence of the Father and the Holy Ghost. What obedience wilt Thou practice? All that is ordained to Thee from moment to moment by Thy Father.

Thy human subsistence seems annihilated as though Thou madest use only of the person of Thy Mother. Whither Thou goest Thou art borne by her; her respiration gives Thee breath, her life is Thine. O, poor Savior, Thou livest on the alms of Thy Mother, whom Joseph sustains by his labors. Art Thou not a little Lazarus, living by the crumbs, the drops of substance of the body and blood of Thy holy Mother? Immensity enclosed in that virginal cloister. Holy Virgin, animating Thy Son, thou art all chaste; two Virgins who produce in Saint Joseph sentiments of virginal poverty. Saint Joseph is the guardian of your holy society. He Who as God was not subject to His Father, becoming man, is subject to Him, and to the Blessed Virgin, by the order of His Father, which love has prompted Him to embrace. Jesus Christ, God and man, Incarnate Word, what an admirable religion I behold in Thee! As Word, a General; in Thy soul a Provincial; in Thy body Guardian of the Divine fullness! In Thee, O Jesus Christ, is all plenitude. In the bosom of Thy holy Mother I see this excellent religion. Thirty years with her, what exercises of a religious noviceship didst Thou not accomplish?"

Mother de Matel follows up these religious exercises in the mortal life of the Savior, and then, passing to His Sacramental life, she continues: "After spending three years on the mission with Thy Apostles, Thou wouldst consecrate Thyself, body and soul, a perfect holocaust on Calvary, and having to do it in a public and bloody manner, Thou wouldst give Thyself impassibly, though still mortal, in the last Supper, establishing the last Order on earth, the abridgment of all others. It is in the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament, that Thou art the Religion, and the Religious, more strictly even than in Thy Mother's virginal bosom. Although

glorified and immortal, Thou art as in death, as a lamb that is sacrificed, with Thy Sacred Wounds; confined, without Thy local extension; having eyes and not seeing, ears and not hearing; and so with Thy other senses; Thy holy soul not operating through them; having Thy body as though it were a spirit, even to the end of the world.

"O infinite God! O infinitesimal cloister! A particle contains Thee! What chastity! Such that being truly flesh and blood, Thou art there purely, spiritually, virginally. This is the flesh that is the food of virgins. Thy blood the wine that engenders virgins.

"Thy poverty is reduced to a particle that is scarcely appreciable, and even then is but a shadow, an accident that hides Thee. What necessity would we not suffer Thee to experience, wert Thou capable of suffering? Thou wouldst be a Lazarus, all covered with sores, and languishing at the door of our hearts, begging a crumb from our compassion or remembrance. Our ungrateful hearts often refuse Thee and send the hungry dogs of our passions to increase Thy pains and to drive Thee away.

"And here we see the most incomparable obedience that has ever been or shall be. Every priest can cause Thee to descend at will, and where and when he wills, if he have but bread and wine at hand, even for the diabolical incantations of sorcery. Thou remainest in any place till the resolution of the sacred elements, though it were in the bodies of dumb beasts, and sinners are worse; Thou knowest it, Thou seest, Thou endurest." . . .

From principles so assured, from views so elevated, great duties are devolved on religious souls. Jeanne does not leave her daughters ignorant of them; and because specially devoted to the worship of the Incar-

nate Word and of the Blessed Sacrament, and being honored in that vocation, she wishes them to be foremost in these duties. The Incarnate Word tells them in particular: "Be ye perfect, even as My Heavenly Father is perfect, and be ye holy, even as I am holy. As My Father sent Me, so I send you, to do His will. He sent Me into a cloister, where I remained so long as He willed. After which, a true religious, I was like a novice, obeying St. Joseph and My holy Mother most perfectly in perfect chastity and poverty. At the Jordan I made My profession before the Holy Trinity and John the Baptist. Though chosen superior of angels and men, I behaved as though I were inferior to all other creatures, annihilating myself; and all My mortal life was an annihilation. And, now that I lead an immortal life, that I may prove that My love is greater than death, though glorified in Heaven, I choose to remain in the Blessed Sacrament as though dead. It is precisely that I may be the form and end at which religious must aim, who are by an especial privilege of My providence, My disciples, My daughters, My spouses. They must be the basins of the fountain, that is Myself and My Blessed Mother.

"They must always purify themselves, they must always enlighten; I wish them to be daughters of light, that they may receive Me as King. They must be a continual presentation to My Father, leaning through love on Me. As My Humanity renounced its personality, they must renounce themselves and live only in Me, to Me, through Me and for Me, and all their love must be crucified. If they are nailed to this cross of love, they shall be My dear spouses, and true imitators, and through them I will draw many souls. Let them be little in their own eyes, as the grain of mustard seed, and they will be the Kingdom of My love.

"O Jesus, vouchsafe to us this grace, through the intercession of Thy Holy Mother and of all the Saints in Heaven. Amen."

We have given elsewhere some of Mother de Matel's thoughts on St. Joseph. We shall give here in brief the considerations by which she strove to render the devotion towards this great saint practical in a religious point of view.

She makes this dialogue between the Savior and His spouse.

"Imitate Joseph," He tells her; "his sanctity is for every state of life; it is specially that of thy own, by virtue of which, like him, though in an inferior degree, thou art dedicated to My service and glory. Love Me with his love; serve Me with a fidelity and constancy like unto his.

"Thou dost ask of me, O God, a love equal to that of Joseph! Is that possible for me?

"I do not ask for a love that shall be equal; if thou canst not love Me with all his love, love Me, as he did, with all thy heart; that is, be not content to deny thyself what would destroy thy love, but even that which would weaken it. Be not satisfied even with this, strive to rise higher; do not wait till I command a sacrifice of thee, let it suffice thee that I make known My desire. Canst thou not go so far as to make no difference between the things that I command and those that I desire?

"Thou couldst wish to render to My person the same services that I received from Joseph; I have provided beforehand for thy wish, in telling thee in My Gospel that I would look upon what thou dost for the least of the faithful as done to Me. By the grace of adoption, which I acquired for them at the

cost of My blood, they have become My brethren. Wouldst thou not look upon a service rendered to a brother as done to thyself? And yet, what is thy love compared to that which I had for men? They are but as one body, of which I am the head.

"The persons with whom thou livest are also united to Me by a special bond, in their quality of spouses; can they be aught else but dear to My heart? Thou art aware that in all things spouses are one.

"Thy rule requires thee to keep in mind this truth, which gives thy companions a distinguished place in My Church, and which, according to My martyr Ignatius, confers on them a rank next to the priests of My altar. In thy sisters, then, thou mayest find means to content thy desire to serve Me, as did Joseph. It is true, thou wilt not find the same sensible pleasure experienced by Joseph when he served Me in My own person, but, because thou canst not have that advantage, wilt thou refuse to serve those who represent Me, and who are dear to My heart?"

Jeanne continues these reflections by a commentary from which all Christians may draw profit, and by applying them to a religious life.

"You see, my beloved sisters, the distance that exists between us and Jesus Christ deprives us only of a sensible pleasure which would make the exercise of our love towards Him more easy and sweet.

"I venture to say that, if our faith, which teaches us that Jesus Christ is in our hearts, did not suffice to make our charity constant, then His very presence would not be enough to keep us so."

Having solidly and earnestly established this truth, Jeanne proceeds: "You may say that there is one kind of service that you can never have occasion to

render Him. In fact, Joseph worked for Him alone, and in His sight; he nourished and supported Him by the sweat of his brow; he delivered Him from the fury of Herod. Who amongst us can be so happy as to enjoy this favor? Yourselves, my dear sisters, if so you will.

"Who prevents you from doing for Jesus Christ that which you do? No state is more apt for this, than that of the religious. Do we not work for Jesus Christ when we do nothing but what He wills, and all that He wills? I may say that to accomplish His adorable will is the only service that we can render Him: He dispenses us from all else. He does more, He rejects all else. Besides, is he not in our midst; does He not occupy an apartment in this same house in which we dwell? Can we deny to Him a sight sufficiently penetrating to traverse the space that separates us from Him?

"Moreover, I insist that you are free to render to Jesus Christ the services which seem denied to you by the poverty and solitude that you profess. Will you say that Jesus Christ can not be nourished, supported or preserved from death save in the persons of the poor? There is another life much more precious in His eyes, much dearer to His heart, which He wishes to live amongst men. You perceive that I allude to the life of grace. The mere mention of this life, which causes Jesus Christ to live and reign in our souls, makes you see that the glory that Joseph had in nourishing, supporting and preserving Him from death is not so exclusively his but that you, too, can share in it by the sweat of your brow; that is, by your mortification, and especially by your good example and regularity; you can do so also by your prayers.

"But that which Joseph could not do is in your power, by a privilege that you can not too highly

prize. You can give birth to that life which He did not think too highly purchased at the price of a whole life of humiliation and suffering, ended on the cross. And yet more: you can continue it even after your death. You ask me how this may be. By perpetuating in your Convent the love of regularity, which your example will preserve from relaxation, and by which it will continue to be an asylum ever open to innocence, that is to say, the life through which Jesus Christ lives and reigns in hearts will be preserved, perfected and strengthened against all death.

"St. Joseph was entitled father of Jesus Christ, and Jesus assures to us, not alone the title of His sisters, but even that of His mother; first, in yourselves, where He will be born of your love; and, secondly, in others, in whom you will cause Him to be born by your examples, your good advice and your prayers."

Profoundly impressed with the excellence of the religious life, Mother de Matel could not suffer those who had embraced it to cast a look backward in regret for the trivial advantages of the world, or in calculation of pretended sacrifices. "What then," said she to her daughters, "are the great advantages which we sacrifice in religion when compared to what it gives us? Without counting the hundred-fold even in this world, which, according to the promise of Jesus Christ, we find in religion; without reckoning the means of salvation which it offers, and which no one at the critical moment would exchange for all the crowns of the world; without speaking of these inestimable advantages, is there anything nobler, grander, in the eyes of faith than to be spouses of Jesus Christ? This title alone, when we have the honor of bearing it, should eclipse all others and cause them to be forgotten, or remembered only to be despised."

Jeanne would not have her daughters find satisfaction even in those relations with the world which are authorized by the rule.

"Many seculars," she says, "without regular occupation, find a recreation in our parlors, and unfortunate are those religious who take pleasure in entertaining them; they ruin themselves unless they go there only through obedience and in a spirit of mortification. For, their heavenly Spouse, Who stands near, looks on them through the cloister grating with unspeakable jealousy, and bids them depart in haste and return to their heavenly exercises and to divine meditation." "Forget," He tells them, "the things of the world; it is a winter without fruits, with devastating rains that withdraw into broken cisterns or into streams that find their way below. Our garden has fountains the sources of which are divine. My Father and I are the sources of the Holy Ghost, Who proceeds from Us." He shows to all in general its fruits and flowers, and to each one He says: "Rise up, my daughter, and enter My garden, to rejoice there in innocence. Come and be a dove without guile; leave that to worldlings. Come to thy cell, which is like a hive of honey, and which is aptly compared to a hole in the cliff, and to ruins. Its poverty conceals the riches of heaven. I dwell there with thee; I, in Whom are all the treasures of science and the wisdom of My Father. I do not recall thee from the parlor to the cell that thou mayst bring back with thee the vanities which thou hast seen there. Let them vanish in the moment thou leavest it; turn not back thy thoughts, as did Lot's wife, to see the burning of Sodom. I long to hear thy voice, which to me is sweet and delicious music; thou shouldst not sing or speak save in my praise." *

* Autobiography.

Mother de Matel did not ask only that her daughters should edify the world in those relations which necessity imposed upon them ; she wished the outward reflection of their interior joy of soul to be a convincing proof of the happiness of their state. "Sadness in a religious can scarcely give edification to seculars, since they will generally attribute it to a regret for having taken up the yoke of the Lord ; and thus those will be repelled who might be inclined to embrace the state, and others would be led to think that all is not true that is said of its happiness, or that it is at best but an exaggeration and a pious fraud in defense of religious houses. It is, then, for the glory of the Gospel that they who dwell in them should prevent this scandal by persuading people of the world that true and pure happiness can be found only in the literal practice of its maxims ; and this can be done only by the content which they themselves are made to witness. Oh, how many in leaving a religious, whom they know is bearing the sacred yoke with a generous heart, and who unite in their eyes modesty with a holy joy, are forced to exclaim in their hearts, whilst sighing over their own unhappy lot : "Happy they who are called to bear it ! True happiness in this world is for them alone." *

"Mother de Matel would not permit the titles and distinctions of wordly honor to cross the threshold of the convent, to be esteemed therein ; she recommended those who had once borne them to cause them to be forgotten in their greater simplicity, modesty, and their readiness to accept and seek the lowest offices of the house." On the same principle she recognized in the elders of the Congregation no other privilege save that of a greater perfection and a more scrupulous fidelity. "Their privilege shall be to be the foremost in every-

* The Beatitudes.

thing, as much as their strength may permit; to be more humble, more docile, more yielding in obedience. This is the favor accorded to them by the divine Founder of the Order; a privilege from which He alone can dispense them, as He never will, since there can never be a reason for so doing. How could He permit them to shake and finally overwhelm the edifice of which He was the divine Architect, and of which, by virtue of their age, the offices they have held, and the respect in which they are held, they should be the firmest pillars? Besides, the longer they have resided in religion, the school of virtue, the greater the progress they should have made in humility." She urges the same recommendations on "superiors, and on all those who by their office have authority over others."

From this point of view she sees no limit of effort, or of perfection, at which they may stop. Mary Margaret was a model superior, a saint. Mother de Matel does not hesitate to give her a lesson: "In exhorting those who are committed to your charge, you yourself must serve as example, divesting yourself of every thing that is dearest to nature. Your sister, Helen of Jesus, has as much affection for you as you have for her. I deem it expedient in Our Lord that you mortify the one the other, until I find you both detached from all that is not God."*

Jeanne had all her life exercised herself too well in holy indifference, not to see that it was one of the foundations of religious perfection. "Indifference," she tells her daughters, "is at once the most perfect, and the easiest and surest way, since it is without fear and without desire, and places the soul entirely under the direction of God. By this, I mean indifference of the will, and not of feeling. A thousand reasons, even

* Letters. (October, 1611.)

in your own interest, require of you this holy indifference ; but I mention only that of your consecration, which incessantly says to you: Remember that you no longer belong to yourselves, but to Jesus Christ. Be satisfied, then, with what He will do, or not do, in you. Let your only desire be not to oppose His operations, whatever they may be, and to strive to co-operate with all your might.

" Instead of complaints, let nothing escape your lips but those words with which the people acclaimed the miracles which they witnessed during His mortal life: *He has done all things well.* Say them to yourself when He afflicts you; when He despises you ; when He leaves and abandons you to the assault of your enemies; when He blinds you with the flash of His anger in the midst of your most anxious service. Say it, and say it with an intimate conviction: Yes, He does well so to treat me, and I approve all the severity that He exercises upon me. Amen, so let it be. It is the canticle of assent sung forever by the heavenly choirs ; never tire of chanting it with them."

The pious foundress often recurs to the unhappy influence of a tepid soul in the religious life ; one feels that she fears its presence in her family as a terrible evil. " The first fervor is allowed to relax little by little. The maxims of the Gospel, once so sweet in practice, become intolerably hard to the tepid soul ; she abandons them. Would to God that she stopped there; but she goes farther. She approves and encourages those who follow her example as though she desired them to imitate her. She excuses coldness, resentment, petty revenges. Let them question her on things in which pride or self-love are alone interested, and those passions will always find in her a defender ; she herself begins by consulting the maxims of the world. It is in them that she finds the counsel which

she gives. O, my dear sisters, from how many communities subordination, peace and union are banished, in order to give place to independence, trouble and discord, because of such wicked approval and advice! Does not such a religious merit the name of an emissary of Satan, whose designs she favors?"

We have seen that on occasion Mother de Matel could be severe and firm in dismissing those subjects in whom she recognised no real vocation. But, profoundly convinced of the excellence of the religious life, she looked upon unfaithfulness to one's vocation as an irreparable misfortune, and she neglected nothing to confirm those who were called to it; she did not allow herself to be discouraged by a passing forgetfulness, as the following incident will demonstrate, in which we see at once her discernment and her clemency of spirit. It was subsequent to the return of the community to its convent in Paris, 1649.

"Two of Thy daughters, O, Divine Love, who had not received grace from on high, because they had not been retiring like the others, no longer beheld Thy flowers, nor tasted of Thy honey; they saw only gall and seeming leaves, that fell away through their want of devotion.

"One had herself adroitly removed by her nurse, and the other, to escape from her vocation, artfully gave her parents to understand that she had lost it. Who would not have judged that these two deserved to be separated and rejected from the community, since they had rendered themseves unworthy of the honor Thou hadst intended for them? Every one despaired of their recovery, except her who loves to hope against hope, and who is bound to imitate Abraham, who trusted in God, and it was reputed to him unto justice.* I believed in Thy goodness, though it

* Genesis, xv. 6.

should not be reputed to me unto justice, that my daughters would not be forsaken by Thy mercy, which restored them to their mother. And their mother presented them to Thee, giving their parents reason to hope that their sickness was not unto eternal death, but a striking proof of Thy sovereign goodness and power, and of the truth of the promise I had made that they would become religious at the time that I had pointed out. They showed so much fervor that they begged the holy habit of me, of the Mother Assistant, and the Mistress of Novices, with sighs and tears, for forty days together.

"On the octave of the Epiphany, 1650, the first received the habit; the second, recognizing that she had done, in intention, what the prodigal son had done in fact—asking to go into a foreign country far from the mansion in which Thy love had produced the sanctity that becomes Thy daughters—dissolved in tears, gave utterance to sobs and sighs and groans. She clung to my knees, whilst the weight of Thy love and my maternal affection bent me down and on her neck, embracing her and accepting her with a tenderness that oppressed me in a way that I could not understand. She took the holy habit on the Thursday within the octave of Thy glorious resurrection.

"I entreated the angels to praise Thee in their heavenly canticles, and I invited all the Sisters, my daughters, to share the joy which should be common, of seeing their sisters return to the happiness which they had wished to forfeit, ignorant of the precipice into which they were about to fall, because abyss calls unto abyss, when we abandon the vocation to which Thy Spirit calls us." *

* Autobiography.

An exposition of the virtues of this good Mother will, farther on, complete this chapter by exhibiting to us religious life in one of its best exemplars. Let us now study the special character and spirit of her work.

CHAPTER II.

THE ORDER OF THE INCARNATE WORD—ITS CHARACTER, CONSTITUTIONS AND SPIRIT.

The entire life of Jeanne de Matel is but one continued recital of the foundation of the Order of the Incarnate Word. She was manifestly prepared for the work from her very infancy, and its accomplishment was her life's mission. What is her place, her distinctive sign, in the holy phalanx of founders of religious orders?

Our Lord has frequently made it known in a way very glorious for her; she acknowledges it with enthusiastic tenderness: "Bending down towards me (it was on the feast of St. Peter of Alexandria, one of the defenders of Christ's divinity), Thou madest me understand, dear Love, that, amongst many others, Thou hadst chosen me, most unworthy, to give a more extensive view of Thy Incarnation, and to exhibit that eternal splendor which Thou receivedst from Thy Father, of Whom Thou art the image and the figure of His substance. Thou neededst not to beg of the zeal of Thy creatures, whether in heaven or on earth; but, in Thy incomprehensible wisdom and goodness, Thou didst inspire St. Michael in heaven and St. Peter of Alexandria, and a young maid in France, to maintain and show forth Thy true divinity. I thank Thee, O divine Love, for having associated me in the commission of St. Michael and St. Peter of Alexandria, to combat Lucifer and Arius."

In another contemplation, after having shown her Mary, "destined from all eternity to be His Mother,

and, because of her mission, the object of the fury of the infernal dragon," He adds: "My grace wills to make thee also My Mother in a marvelous way; one that shall cause thee, by a mystic labor and an extension of the Incarnation, to give birth in the Church to Him Whom My Mother bore in Bethlehem. In spite of the anger, the rage and fury of the demon, and the contradictions of men, I have given to thee the eyes and the wings of the eagle to see Me in the bosom of My Father, in the source of divine splendor." . .

In the midst of the combat, the assurances of the heavenly Spouse are reiterated: "My daughter, it is I Who have established My Order; men can not prevent My eternal designs. It is in virtue of My Blood, and by the power of My word, that I shall found this tabernacle. . . I will arise in My might, and shall prove to human wisdom that I know how to lift up the weak, and overturn the proud, who think that they alone should be observed; I will raise up the humble, who seem as though they were not. The Scribes and Pharisees, together with the priests, thought to destroy My doctrine and to banish Me from the world by My death. They were mistaken, for by My death I established My design, and My testament was valid. So, too, My daughter, because men think to prevent the establishment of My Order, I will build it up, and by My Blood, and My Word, you shall be established; and as daughters of the Incarnate Word shall inherit His goods and graces. By My Blood you shall be purified, nourished and adorned. Be faithful to My Love." What tenderness! what a presage! what grace!

On the 4th of July, 1625, two days only after the beginning of the Congregation, Mother de Matel had a vision in which she was clearly shown the establishment of her Order at Lyons, on Mount Gourgillon. But this

prophetic vision seems to have had a wider scope than its immediate object, and to have embraced the whole future of the Order, as our readers may judge for themselves.

"Thou didst show me a holy mountain, at the summit of which I beheld Thy Eternal Father, Who bore in His bosom all the daughters of Thy Order, saying that He would beget them, not of flesh and blood, nor of the will of man, but of the divine will. In behalf of these births, in time, by grace, Thou didst explain to me, Thy natural and eternal generation, saying: 'In this establishment, I, Who am the Incarnate Word, will give extension to My Incarnation. I will dwell with you, and you shall see My glory equal to that of My Father, Who begot Me in divine splendor, or before any creatures were. Thou shalt find me full of grace and truth to accomplish in thee and in My Order all the promises that I have made, now make, and shall make to thee.'" *

"The Father of lights," says Jeanne in another part of her life, "being pleased to enlarge my soul, bade me consider the Incarnation of the Word, and that the Order He willed to found should be its extension; that, although I had not studied in the schools of the world, I was not the less instructed, as His Word was my teacher, and I His pupil; that, by a goodness wholly paternal, He had given me to His Son as a daughter of miracle; that the adorable Savior would be to me father, spouse and son at once, by a species of birth, in the founding of the Order of the Incarnate Word."

"Since My ascension," said the Savior to her, "there have been in the Church Orders dedicated to My Mother and to different saints; but amongst so many

* Autobiography.

there are none that have discovered this rich treasure, and that are consecrated to My Person as that one shall be which thou art to institute, and on which I shall confer great blessings." *

"By a singular grace"—it is Jeanne who speaks—"my Savior told me that He would give Himself to me, by making in me an imprint of Himself and an image of His goodness, so as to be within me a Gospel of Love. I asked Him to explain this to me. He answered that the Gospel of power had been given to the apostles in the miracles they wrought; that the Gospel of wisdom belonged to the doctors, whom He had constituted masters of the world, to teach His doctrine and explain His word; that to me the Gospel of Love was reserved, that I received it in receiving the Word *that came to me*, as is said in St. Luke: *Factum est verbum Domini super Joannem.*" †

It is, then, undoubtedly true that the foundation of an Order, under the title, and in honor of the Incarnate Word, entrusted to Jeanne, may be legitimately regarded as a new manifestation, and, under the circumstances that attended it, a loving prediction of the God-man. This is its first and most special characteristic; which forms its chief honor, distinction and privilege.

Jeanne took a holy pride in this, and loved to recall it to her daughters.

"Your hearts, my dear daughters, enjoy the sweet satisfaction of being singularly devoted to the service and glory of the Incarnate Word, and of being created truly for that noble end. You can not but be aware that a similar destiny is a part of the glory of Mary, His holy Mother. God forbid that I should be

* Autobiography.

† St. Luke, iii., 2. The word of the Lord came to John.

so rash as to institute a comparison of equality between her and you ; her relation to the Incarnate Word is superior to any other that one could have with Him. But that does not prevent our Congregation, by a singular effect of His goodness Who became man in her bosom, from glorying in relations which it does not share with any of the other Orders that give such glory to the Church.

"All, I acknowledge, are instituted to the glory of the Incarnate Word; but, if I may so express myself, they procure it under the banners of certain saints whom they have taken for guides, and whose livery they wear. . . . We, my dear sisters, follow no standard save that of the Incarnate Word. We have no other Founder but Him. O my dear daughters, you call me mother, and I venture to say that I deserve the name because of the tender love I have for you, but yours would be a great mistake if you gave it to me as the foundress of the Order. Have I ever called it by an other name than that of the Incarnate Word? It is, then, truly His Order, and it is thus that He always speaks of it, as you may see in my writings, in which I have always given His own expressions with the greatest exactness. It would be a sacrilege for me to call myself its institutor. I have been but the instrument that He used to found it Himself.

"Enjoy, then, my dear sisters, the sweet consolation of believing that the Order, of which you are members, is what its name indicates, the Order of the Incarnate Word, whom it recognizes as its sole institutor. Note, too, that it is from the Incarnate Word that it takes the habit with which it is invested. You must, my dear sisters, believe me when I assure you that, with the exception of that which the Church has wisely prescribed in regard to the religious habit,

everything else was dictated to me by the Incarnate Word, and given in symbols under which He was figured.

"Remember, my dear sisters, what I have told you of His designs in the founding of the order; you will see that what he intended was by this means to be born anew into the world, and, to manifest Himself a second time. Hence, He gave His Mother as the principal protectress of the Order."

The Order of the Incarnate Word, and it is its second special characteristic, has divinely received in its foundress, and for itself, an apostolate. Its very name is a sermon; in our days it is the affirmation in a living work of the great Catholic truth, from which all others radiate, which has its analogies in the human soul, its prefiguration in the sciences, and the laws of the universe; *The Word was made flesh.* "Thou art," he says to her, "a vessel of election to bear my light to the end of the world. Do not allege your sex an excuse, that you are not a preacher to announce My word in the Church. Thou shalt announce it in the way that I have ordained for thee; thou shalt testify of Me before kings, that is, the priests and doctors, in whose presence thou shalt not be confounded." On another occasion it was the same thought under a different figure: "I have made thee a vessel to bear from distant lands the bread and grain wherewith to nourish whole provinces. Carry the bread of life out not only for those who shall have the happiness to follow thee in so noble an enterprise, but for a world of persons who have never known the obligations which they owed to the Word, Who became flesh for them. This Institute shall be established for the glory of the Sacrament of Love; it will give life to many souls." *

* Autobiography.

Our Lord was equally explicit in a vision which she had in 1648, concerning the apostolate reserved for her writings and work. "I saw," says she, "a tabernacle of crystal, chased and framed in gold; it opened from above. My daughter, thou art the tabernacle of crystal in which I am pleased to enter, to dwell, and from it to spread My light. Tabernacles of gold and silver are not adapted to the sun as this one is. Many souls are like wood, others like silver or gold; they fructify like wood, sound like silver and are as gold in the proof. But all these because they are not transparent do not make Me clearly known. I have shown thee that thou art a crystal, but remember that thou art fragile as glass. Thou makest Me known because thy simplicity makes thee transparent; I make Myself known through thee as in a mirror; I inclose thee lovingly in gold, I resound by thy spirit, thy pen, thy tongue as by silver, *argentum electum lingua justi.*"*

The light that enlightened Jeanne as foundress had its increase and progress. In 1625, when she began the Congregation, she knew the general plan, the essential ends; she did not yet know the name, and the first project of the Constitutions then bore the title: *Constitution of the Religious Institute of the daughters of the Lamb Jesus.*

The Lamb Jesus; the contemplative piety of Mother de Matel finds delicate play in commenting this name. It is already, of course, the Incarnate Word, but she sees Him as "the Lamb offered up to the heavenly Father from the beginning of the world; the Lamb of the Jewish deliverance, freeing Israelite souls from the bondage of Satan in the religious Institute;" the Lamb of the crib, sought out by the shepherds; the immortal Lamb of the new Jerusalem, seen by St. John in the

* Autobiography. Prov. X., 20. The tongue of the just is as choice silver.

Apocalypse; the Lamb whose blood bleaches the garments of the guests invited to the eternal nuptials. And from these different aspects she derives that general spirit of adoration, of imitation of the Word, which is the character of the Order.

When Our Lord had given her His full instructions, the Constitutions were definitely drawn up and submitted to the authority of the Church. They were approved by Urban VIII, and confirmed later by Innocent X. It is time that we should make them known by an abstract.

The Sovereign Pontiff, Urban VIII, in erecting the Congregation, formally gave it the name of *Order of the Incarnate Word and of the Blessed Sacrament*, and indicated five principle ends: the increase of divine worship; the good of souls by the instruction of youth, and by zeal for the conversion of sinners; the adoration and imitation of the Incarnate Word; a special devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and to the Blessed Virgin.

The persons, young women, or widows, who seek admission, must be in such a condition as to enable them to fulfill the ordinary functions of the religious life, to live quietly and virtuously in a community, without trouble for themselves or others. The year of noviceship is preceded by three months of postulency before taking the habit. It is prolonged for three years ~~before~~ after the profession.

The religious recite, or, on certain days, chant the little office of the Blessed Virgin; but, during the most of the octaves, and on many feasts, they say the Roman office. On all Thursdays not included in the above, they recite the office of the Blessed Sacrament, and, on Saturdays, of the Immaculate Conception. It is unnecessary to add that the constitutions

prescribe prayer, spiritual reading, the reception of the Sacraments, and the practices usual to other communities.

The profession consists of three vows. The religious have nothing of their own, they can use nothing without general or particular permission, and must be ready to give up at the will of the Superior that which is at their disposition.

The love of poverty must always show itself, and the community itself must be restricted to those resources that are necessary to support the charges incumbent on it.

Devotion, humility and mortification are recommended to the sisters as the guardians of their chastity. Obedience must be the gauge of their religious perfection, and they must practice it with exactness, punctuality, humility, courage, cordiality, without acceptation of persons or employment, seeing always Our Lord in the one who commands. The constitutions recommend a great spirit of charity.

Twice a year they renew their vows of profession.

The houses of the Order are subject to the cloister according to the canons of the holy council of Trent.

They rise at five o'clock. The cells must be simply furnished, and must not be locked. Fire is allowed only in cases of necessity.

The abstinences are those imposed by the Church on her children. Out of paschal times a weekly fast is enjoined on such as are not dispensed by health or occupation. The use of penances and mortification is regulated by prudence and discretion, according to temperaments and labors. The *culpa* and the chapter are used as in the majority of religious communities.

For menial services the rule admits lay-sisters, who take part in the religious exercises of the community, and have special practices necessary to their sanctification.

A kind of inferior noviceship is also recognized, under the name of Little Sisters of the Child Jesus, and Little Daughters of the Blessed Virgin, to which children may be admitted who are too young to be received into the Order, but who are desirous of being trained in its spirit, and of wearing its livery. Their obligations and privileges are determined.

Boarding schools may be established in the convents to promote the Christian education of young girls, one of the ends of the Order.

The ordinary Superior of each convent is the Bishop of the diocese in which it is situate. The Superioress has the general superintendence and the principal interior government of the house in spiritual and temporal affairs. She is aided by an Assistant, a Mistress of Novices, and a Treasurer, in their respective offices. She is elected for a term of three years. Important affairs are considered in an assembly of all the choir sisters.

This is what the pious foundress writes to a religious on the dispositions required of one who would be admitted to the Order, and of the spirit which she desired to see prevail therein : "I have endeavored to make the Sisters understand that the spirit of this Institute is one of innocence and charity, and of a perfect imitation of the virtues practiced by the Incarnate Word on earth. He has manifested the excess of His humility in His Incarnation, by an ineffable abnegation ; His love and obedience by dying for all men. After His death He would prove that divine love is stronger than death, by shedding the blood that

remained in the Sacred Heart. It is from this heart's blood that the daughters of the Incarnate Word are born ; as the latest comers in the Church of God, they should be the most fervent. Pray to Him, Reverend Father, that they may be humble and faithful to their vocation ; that by mortification they may imitate their Spouse, who is a Spouse of blood ; that, as they cannot shed their own for His name, since the faith is established and freely professed, they may at least be consumed by an ardent charity, with the fire that He came to kindle in the world, and which He desires should burn on the altar of our hearts.

"One of the principal dispositions which the Incarnate Word requires in those who enter His Order, is to come through love, ready to deprive themselves of all things, and to be perpetual holocausts for Him who was a victim for them.

"Your Reverence desires to know what is the spirit of the Order. It is a gentle one ; the rule of St. Augustine, therein observed, not being austere. Great strength is not required for admission. The functions practiced are sanctified rather in their ends than by corporal pain ; the weak are not easily received, because they cannot be engaged in the instruction of youth ; when they are once received they are not dismissed ; charity is exercised in bearing with them, and they merit by their patience."

The following letter, written by Jeanne to her religious, may be regarded as a compendium of the spirit which she desired in the Order. She begins by making the Incarnate Word speak to them :

"My Well Beloved Daughter :—

"Listen to your Spouse, Who tells you : You belong to Me in a special manner ; I gave Myself to you through love ; keep Me, I am your Incarnate

Word ; I wish to be buried in you. Remain in Me Who am the true vine, planted by My Father, Who loves you, if only you love Me with the love you owe Me, of Whom I will ask for you the light and glory that I have with Him. Where I am, there I would have you to be. As I was the grain of wheat buried in the ground, and dead, that I might bear fruit, you, too, will be, and by My grace you will bear fruit, and your fruits will be to eternal life. If you are oppressed by imperfections, come to Me and I will relieve you. Learn of Me meekness and humility of heart ; take up My yoke that is sweet indeed, and My burthen that is light indeed, and you will find peace of soul, notwithstanding your troubles, which I make My own. If they have persecuted Me, should you not feel honored in being treated in like manner by those who will consider themselves as thereby doing service to God ? They know not the designs that My Father and I entertain."

She continues : "The Incarnate Word, my dear daughters, being the word of the Father, speaks to all those souls whom He desires to instruct, and especially to those whom He intends should teach. He addresses to all of us these beautiful words ; they are a lesson to us ; let us do and teach, since His goodness has called us to this office ; to be great in heaven, let us be little in this world. Our Heavenly Spouse says to all of us, be holy, because I am holy ; be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect. It is by the help of His grace that we shall imitate Him and share His holiness and perfection, loving Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and our neighbor as ourselves.

"It is in His divine love that I receive you all as my very dear daughters and honored sisters, and that I embrace you cordially in the heart of the Incarnate

Word, and in the virginal heart of His Holy Mother, to whom I transfer all that is given to me. I have taken her for our Sovereign Mother, since she is the Mother of our Royal Spouse, Who gave her to us; she will not reject us, but will take us all to her maternal bosom. Let us, with our father St. Augustine, say that we have for portion the wounds of the Son and the breasts of the Mother. What more could we ask for in heaven or on earth? In the Incarnate Word we have everything. It is in this All that I am, and shall ever be, my honored and beloved daughters, your humble servant and good mother,

"JEANNE DE MATEL."

Let us listen once more to the mother insisting on the spirit that she desires to instill in her daughters. It is their most precious inheritance, and for all religious souls has its lesson and its grace.

"The daughters of my Order must have for their souls' highest aim the Kingdom of God, that is the Word, and they must suffer here below for justice' sake, and then all will belong to them, and they to the Incarnate Word. They must fulfill all justice in imitation of the Incarnate Word and of His Precursor, overcoming all difficulties, renouncing themselves; let them bear the cross; let them follow the Incarnate Word; let them die daily, but for Him, in continual mortification, that they may lose their soul through love of Him, and for His love, that in the next life they may find it again in love." The same doctrine flows ever from her pen. To the first five professed of the Order she writes, and in them to all: "Remember that you must be dead to all that is not God, and at all times you must be ready to shed your blood for Him Who has clothed you with His precious blood, that

you might be courageous in combating all sorts of enemies."

And elsewhere:

"O my dear daughters, little as it is, how great our Congregation would be if pride could not enter therein, and humility should establish its reign in all our hearts! . . . My divine Love told me that I should bring forth a number of holy daughters, who would live a heavenly life, like sapphires divinely set in the Order of the Incarnate Word, which should be a bosom of ivory like that of the Spouse of the Canticles."

In many a page that is full of strength and authority, Mother de Matel shows her daughters how they should bear contradiction and receive graces.

"One morning, being at prayer, and recommending my daughters to God, subject as they were to the persecution of relatives who tried to turn them from their holy resolutions, my divine Spouse told me that they were under His protection, and that those whom He had called should persevere. He showed them to me drinking milk, but on close observation the milk seemed to be blood. I asked my Spouse the explanation of this change. He answered that afflictions are milk to those who rightly consider them, but to others are blood; that the good go straight to God, seeing but Him. . . . The souls that belong to the world, not seeking God, encounter nothing but trouble; but God looks down on those who suffer for love of Him, and gives them the milk of consolation.

"The others are always in pain, because they experience the avenging hand of God, Who justly punishes them; it is they who oblige Him to this severity, though He is inclined to show us only mercy.

"So, too, a nurse having too much milk seeks a child for her own relief. If the child is content to feed

quietly, it draws forth milk, but, if it maliciously bites the breast, it brings the blood. And so it is with many. . . . Jesus Christ offers Himself to all, especially to religious souls, his bosom overflowing with the milk of His grace, and with this delicious food He wishes to nourish them. Many turn aside from His tender and loving bosom, whilst some approach only to bruise and tear it. How many are they who turn the milk of His mercy into the blood of His justice, by their evil intentions.

"I repudiate those of my daughters, who, in the Order of the Incarnate Word, have not a right intention. . . . Jesus Christ, who is all equity, will withdraw from them the milk of His mercy; He will offer and give it to those who have a single heart and right intentions."

Like St. Francis of Sales, like Our Savior Himself, Mother de Matel wished to attain mortification of the body through that of the spirit, but she did not neglect to assure victory for the soul by fighting the senses.

"Our rule, though it proposes nothing that this miserable body should dread, does not fail to mortify it, almost without its perceiving it; each stroke seems inappreciable, but they return so frequently that at last it feels them without reflecting on a weakness to which it finds itself finally reduced. . . . Hence, my dear sisters, do not allow yourselves to be discouraged at the sight of other Institutes which make profession of greater austerities than are practiced in your own. For, without mentioning that it grants you permission to practice them yourselves, always with the requisite permission, it causes you to exercise another, which mortifies you all the more that it is at every instant of the day, and to which it would be strange that you should be insensible. . . .

"But if the leniency of the rule and the discretion of those who direct you does not satisfy the desire that some have for exterior mortification, let them gratify themselves by embracing interior mortification. This is a vast sea, into which they may cast themselves without fear of shipwreck, where they will need no pilot, and may spread all sail. . . . .

"Permit no partiality," she writes to one of the superiors, "no attachment, no singularity. In the early Church they were but one heart and one soul, persevering in prayer. Love ye one another in holy love. May each of my daughters say in truth: 'I am all to my beloved, and He is all in all to me.'" *

Already, in 1669, a confraternity was established, entitled the Confraternity of the Incarnate Word, in the Convent of Lyons, in order to associate pious souls n the spirit of the Order, and in its merits and practices. Erected first by Monseignieur de Neuville, it was approved, definitely established, and enriched with indulgences by a brief of His Holiness, Clement X., June 20th, 1670. The exterior badge of the association is the red scapular, in imitation of the scapular of the religious, to be given by a priest duly authorized. The confraternity still exists. By a concession granted June 11th, 1877, the confraternity erected in the chapel of the Incarnate Word at Evaux (Creuse) is enriched with the same indulgences granted to the old association. We believe that it is the same with other convents.

Although the convents of the Order are independent of each other, Mother de Matel had indicated in her project of the constitutions, drawn up in 1625, a measure that is followed in other congregations, and which is eminently favorable to unity of views, and to

* Letter to Sister Calvary Gérin.

fraternal charity. "All the convents shall have a respect for the one first established, and have recourse to it in doubt, and for affairs of the Order, in order to be enlightened from the original source. They shall respect, therefore, new regulations made for the good of the Order, and they shall not make or obey new statutes, nor change or lessen them without notifying the first convent; in all things they will conform to its decisions.

"Each convent shall be obliged to send it yearly a written account of the principal things that have occurred in the preceding twelve months, in the form of annals, that may serve as matter for the Order, and a copy of such letter shall be kept in each convent in a book for that purpose, that it may serve as a history of successive events." *

When we read the accounts which Mother de Matel gave to her Superiors in virtue of holy obedience, we experience some little trouble in view of the promises made to the Order. It is impossible to suspect illusion or fraud; the character of the foundress, her simplicity, her humility, her candor, the graces evidently granted to her intercession, the testimony of all who knew her attest it; she has written, she has said nothing but what she had heard. On the other hand, the history of the Order, however great it has been, does not seem to correspond to these promises. What, must then, be our conclusion? That our impatience misleads us; in the eyes of Him to Whom the centuries are but as one day, the time at hand is not always to-morrow. Do not the sacred writers speak of the end of the world as imminent? Are not the times that have elapsed since Our Lord to them as a day that is prolonged?

* First project, ch. 2, 4, and 5.

This seems to be the way in which Our Lord wished to be understood in a magnificent revelation, in which, alluding to the prophecy of Jacob to Judah his son, He compares Jeanne to a lioness: "The lion and the lioness awake their young by their roaring; the children who shall be born of the sacred nuptials that I have contracted with thee, shall be awakened by the loudness of our voice and the awe of our words, especially in the establishment of our new Order in the Church, and we shall make the world resound with a salutary roar that shall rouse men from the slumber into which they are plunged. . . . The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, said Jacob to his son. That sceptre, it is I, thy King, and thy Kingdom. I have given myself to thee as spouse; I will give myself to the Order that I shall establish by thy means. I shall come, as it were, again into the world for the good of many souls who await Me.

"My daughter and My spouse, this second coming of the Word, Myself, do not doubt it, shall be *before the reign of the militant Church shall have ended.*" * In a letter to the Abbé de Cérisy, Mother de Matel writes these astonishing words: "He Who can not deceive has assured me that the gates of hell shall never prevail against this Order, however great the rage of the demons and the contradictions he may excite against it."

The prediction has not failed. We shall see the Order of the Incarnate Word, in the lifetime of its foundress, fearfully agitated. One wing of the edifice wavers, and the whole, humanly speaking, should fall, but the work of Jeanne remains. During a whole century, as Jesus Christ in the day of His exile and

* Autobiography.

passion, and as the Church in the Catacombs, the Order remained hidden or obscured, contemned or assailed.

The storm of the revolution passed away ; mighty oaks fell never to arise again, and this last comer, in appearance so feeble, the Order of the Incarnate Word, sees its broken stock put forth fresh shoots among the ruins. Let us hail this resurrection which we behold, and which gives no uncertain sign that it is the dawn of a glorious life.

CHAPTER III.

THE COSTUME OF THE ORDER OF THE INCARNATE WORD.

We have seen, how in a series of visions, Our Lord indicated the details of that costume that was to be borne by the daughters of His Order. Mother de Matel gives many explanations of the allegorical meaning of the colors of the Order—the blue of the tunic, the white of the exterior habit, the scarlet of the scapular and mantle. We reproduce a few:

"In this dress is represented the vesture of the strong woman clad in strength and beauty.

"The first color, red, represents strength; white, the greatest purity; the blue of the tunic is the color of the Eternal Father and of the Blessed Virgin; it is the interior life which will make the Bridegroom give His Heart to the Spouse, and cause her to live on the last day. This, Our Savior, is the true Joseph, clothed in a variegated robe, of blue, because He is of heaven; of white, because He is the brightness of eternal light; of red, because He is truly man, of the most pure blood of Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin.

"This habit represents great mysteries in the Holy Trinity; the blue is the Eternal Father, Who has always remained in the heavens, not manifesting Himself sensibly as the other Persons; the Son, all white, is the splendor of the Father and the brightness of eternal light; the red is the Holy Ghost, the fire of love.

"These three colors also form the rainbow that was seen to surround the throne of God. Every one

of the religious should be the throne of God and of the Lamb, and should have His colors, even as the lambs of Jacob were variegated like the rods in the troughs. God is a fountain, the Savior is the rod of the Eternal Father, the true Jacob, by whom He came into the world, since the Son it was who made known to us the Father.

"These colors are also those worn by Our Lord in His passion; the blue of His bruised flesh, the white of Herod's robe, the red of the purple mantle.

"These three colors show Him the true sovereign; blue for the heavens, white for the world, red for hell. By the divine wrath all sorts of men shall be prostrated at sight of the Lamb. The blue denotes the assurance and loyalty of the citizens of heaven; white, the hope of those on earth; red, that there is no pardon for those in hell. The religious must be a heaven, in which the will of God is accomplished; she must be the earth, to produce lilies in profusion, with which the great Solomon shall be more gloriously clothed than was the other Solomon in all his ornaments; He will even feed on them, according to the saying, what pleases, feeds. The red is the jealousy of the Spouse, more enduring than hell, who comes that He may be loved with a love singular and without end." *

We shall cite here some passages from a chapter consecrated to the mystical meaning of the colors of the Incarnate Word, and the different parts of the costume.

"What a favor, O divine Love, Thou hast conferred on the daughters of Thy Order, in bidding me to clothe them in red and white, thus granting them what was said by St. Paul: 'Clothe yourselves with Our Lord Jesus Christ.' It was to honor on earth, to

* First project of the Constitutions.

represent and announce in these last times the excess of love that caused Thy sorrowful passion; that, in seeing the white we might admire Thy innocence, striving to imitate it; that, in the red, we should recall the obligation contracted by us to offer ourselves without ceasing, should Thy glory require it, even to death, for Thee who died for love of us. . . . .

"The red scapular that we shall wear will be the figure of Thy cross, dyed with Thy blood, by which Thou didst reconcile heaven and earth. . . . .

"The crown of thorns, inclosing Thy name, and, beneath, the heart in which is written *Amor meus*, my Love, will be the protest of Thy daughters to love naught but Thee."

Jeanne received a touching communication on these words, *Jesus Amor meus*, inscribed on the scapular of the Order. On a certain feast of St. Michael, being elevated in spirit near this archangel, she rejoiced in his glory and congratulated him on the triumphant affirmation of his name: *Michael*, (*Quis ut Deus*). * Through a grand courtesy, this glorious prince and the angels answered: *Jesu, amor meus, Jesu, amor meus.* † And then, as it were like an echo, answering themselves, they again said: *Jesu, amor meus.* I wondered at the reiteration, but St. Michael said to me: 'Even as the Divine Word honored me by this divine name, of which He loves the repetition, so He wishes thee to be honored and praised by the elect, bearing on thy heart, *Jesu, amor meus.* These are grand words, and as wonderful as: *Quis ut Deus.*"

Continuing to instruct Mother de Matel on the mysterious meaning of the scapular, Our Lord told her

* Who is like unto God?

† Jesus, my love.

one day: "Note that this part of the habit of the Order resembles the Ephod and the Rational worn by the high-priest of the old law when he entered the sanctuary. In the Rational he wore the names of the twelve chiefs of the twelve tribes of Israel; but what help could he expect of them? And the rich embroidery, together with the valuable gems of the Rational, were they worth the thorns that encircled My head, or the nails that held Me to the Cross, as emblazoned on thy scapular? But what I particularly love in the scapular of My Order, is to see in the midst of the thorns, and underneath My name, a heart burning with love. It is upon this heart that My eyes love to rest, because I look upon it as the symbol of the hearts of My spouses; this heart tells Me that I am their only love. Could they consecrate their heart to one who would love them more? They find in Me, in a sovereign degree that *Doctrine* and *Truth* of which the Rational of Aaron bore only the names. In Me is all the beautiful and the good: I am beauty and goodness itself.

"If they do not wear this symbol of their love in vain, if I dwell truly in their heart, if I am their only love, that heart shall be a propitiatory, and the true Holy of Holies, an altar of which I will be the victim, always immolated though living, a victim without spot, and of pleasing savor to My Father, to Whom I will offer Myself, in their name, by the Holy Spirit. . . . . Their heart shall be to Me an asylum where I shall repose in assurance, and the constancy of their hearts shall hush the complaint of My own. I shall no longer say: 'The birds of the heavens have nests, in which to place their young, and the foxes have holes; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' * Accord-

* St. Math. VIII, 20.

ing to another instruction of the Lord the scapular was to be regarded as a summons to 'patience and to interior and exterior purity.' "

The cincture also is full of teaching and promise: "My daughter," said Our Lord to Jeanne, "speak to thy daughters of the red cincture that I gave them to wear. Tell them not to regard the material, poor and common as it is, it should be to them more beautiful and rich than if it were of cloth of gold, and adorned with precious stones, for it is the symbol of the cord which My enemies made use of to hale Me to death for love of them. That cord bound My body so tightly that it penetrated My flesh, and bore away shreds when it was torn off in order to attach Me to My Cross. But those cords have disappeared and do not receive the honors paid to the other instruments of My Passion, and which are rendered to the chains of My Apostles. Teach thy daughters, dear Spouse, that My Providence has relied on their zeal to honor the red cincture that I have given them. They can not wear it without remembering that I was bound, as criminal never was, and for their love. Those cords that caused me such tortures were the loving cords that I had prepared with which to draw and bind them to Myself. Can they ever wish to sever them? Can they desire to weaken them? Let them remember that it is love, the most tender, and the most generous that made them; this thought will render them holy and inviolable. . . .

"This vestment will be dearer and more honored when they recollect the cruel and shameful captivity to which I subjected Myself in order to purchase for them eternal freedom. I promise that it shall be their portion if they preserve the purity merited by My Blood, with which they are covered, and, as it were, clothed. The mystic habit that I have given them

will make Me regard them with complacency, and I will lead them into My glory."

As to the mantle, we remember the indications that Jeanne received, and how Our Lord answered her doubts and her fears of mockery.

"The red mantle that I have given thee," He says later, "shows you by its loving shelter that you are My beloved spouses. It is a regal and a sacred mantle. It is the royal purple." On another occasion, He says: "My daughters assume the red mantle only, after their profession, when they are crucified with Me, because I wore a similar mantle only when I was to be crucified!" * . . . . How glorious and dear this connection!

There is nothing in this beautiful vesture, even to the sandals, that is not symbolic and does not breathe of duty. "Our feet are shod in red," says Mother de Matel, "to make us understand that we are to assist thee in treading the wine-press of Thy love."

* Autobiography.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FATHERS OF THE INCARNATE WORD.

"Our worthy mother," say the daughters of Jeanne de Matel, in the preface to a work that we are about to analyze, "had made long and fervent meditations on the three states of life that the Incarnate Word had led for our instruction: His hidden life in the house of St. Joseph; His penitential and solitary life in the desert; His active life amongst men in the last years of His sojourn on earth. She felt herself inspired to establish a seminary and community of regular priests, who, by their state, should, like the religious of her Congregation, be specially devoted to the worship of the Person of the Incarnate Word."

It is of this Institute of the Fathers of the Incarnate Word and of the Blessed Sacrament that we are now to speak.

After long reflection Jeanne drew up a plan of Constitutions in accordance with those that the Church had sanctioned for her religious. But, ever humble and prudent, she would not rely on herself, but submitted her plans to Rev. Father Carré, one of her directors. The pious and learned Dominican fully approved her idea, and willingly took upon himself the charge of revising and correcting what she had proposed. And thus were written the Constitutions of this second branch of the Order of the Incarnate Word. We give a methodical and succinct abridgement of them.

The Fathers of the Incarnate Word are priests and religious clerics, who live in Community. They look

upon the Incarnate Word as their chief patron, and on the Blessed Virgin as the Mother-General of the Congregation. They must have great devotion to the holy Apostles and to the angels, especially to St. Michael and St. Gabriel, and to the holy persons who had intercourse with Our Lord.

From the fundamental idea of the Congregation, the imitation of the three states of life of the Incarnate Word, Jeanne derived the following ends of the Institute :

1. As Our Lord passed thirty years of His life in humility, in labors, and in the exercise of charity towards St. Joseph, whom He nursed during a long sickness, the Fathers of the Incarnate Word will be hospitable inasmuch as circumstances may admit. They may receive travelers and the poor, in case of need, offering them shelter, a few days of rest, and good advice.

But the most touching and perfect hospitality is that which is given to souls. Hence, Mother de Matel wished that the houses of the Fathers of the Incarnate Word should be houses for spiritual retreats: "The poor as the rich, seculars and ecclesiastics, according to their means and faculties, shall be welcome to these holy retreats, when they desire to enter there in order to make a serious review of themselves."

2. So as to imitate the Incarnate Word in His solitary life in the desert, Jeanne insisted on the Fathers devoting themselves, as much as possible, to interior exercises, to study and prayer. She wished them to be men of prayer and of steady application. In remembrance of the practices of the Cenobitic life of the deserts of the Thebais, she desired that in their garden there should be separate oratories, with cells, into which the religious could retire from time to time, the

better to separate themselves from distracting occupations, and from all noise, to study and pray, alone with God.

3. In memory of the public life of Our Lord, and to imitate Him, Mother de Matel called her religious to the apostleship. They would give missions in the parishes at the invitation of the curates and bishops, whom they would feel honored in assisting. "They must be desirous of shedding the last drop of their blood for the salvation of souls who have cost so much to Jesus Christ, and, meanwhile, if they are competent and their superiors send them, announce the truth in villages, towns, the mountains, and even in armies."

But amongst all other forms of the apostolate there was one that Mother de Matel regarded as an essential function of the Congregation of the Fathers of the Incarnate Word, the education of youth. "One of the important services," she says, "that the Congregation can render the Church, is the education given to youth." And in another place: "The good education of youth being, as it were, the soul of this Congregation, the Superiors will be careful to provide good masters."

Jeanne considers this work from a double point of view. They will receive into the houses of the Order "boarders, as many as may present themselves, and for whom there shall be accommodations and a sufficient number of religious for their care and instruction." But, this function, common to other teaching Congregations, does not suffice for her heart, burning with charitable zeal. She saw around her a great number of children, whose families, ruined by war and the evils of the times, could not give them an education, to the great loss of the Church, and of the common good. She adopted them and grouped them under a touching

name, as a spiritual family of the Incarnate Word: "As amongst the nobility there are poor as well as rich, and others but moderately well to do, they will receive the one and the other, exercising zeal toward all, as much as possible, in imitation of Christ and His apostles. Children may be received at the age of seven years, and remain in the convent until they are able to serve the Church and the King. These young nobles were to be called Children of the Holy Family. . . . . When they find boys of talent and docility, even though they be not noble, the Fathers should receive them and take great pains to bring them up in piety and learning."

And then what touching interest she takes in the work: "In order to increase the number of students the Fathers shall rather diminish other charities than fail in this, living frugally, so that by temperance, economy, mortification of the palate, and manual labor, they may assist poor youths in their education and in the necessaries of life."

Speaking of the brothers who are occupied in exterior services, and in the guardianship of the students, she recommends that "when they succeed in these employments they should not be removed to be engaged in others. That being the most important, they should be continued in it so long as they are faithful in the religious life, and their health permits it."

The same spirit of intelligent and devoted charity is seen in the regulations which she gives for the direction of youth, and the Fathers of the Incarnate Word had only to understand fully the prescriptions of their Mother in order to become excellent instructors in every respect.

4. The imitation of the Incarnate Word does not consist simply in the profound study of His mysteries;

it should be animated by a constant contemplation of His divine Person. To reproduce Him in their lives, the fathers shall become the familiars of His Court, and approach Him as nearly as possible. Hence, preceding in her desires and prescriptions the rules of more modern Institutes, and mindful of the title given to her Order by authority of the Church, she calls her fathers the *Religious of the Blessed Sacrament.*

"In all established houses and Convents there shall be *Perpetual Adoration* of the Blessed Sacrament, and no one shall be exempt by night or day. The fathers and brothers shall take their turn, two by two, to pass half an hour before the Blessed Sacrament. They shall wear the cord around the neck during the hour or the half hour, as the Superior may determine. They shall make the act of reparation, inclining profoundly and humbly, interiorly as well as exteriorly, holding a lighted candle in their hand. They will pray for the restoration of the faith in England, and for all the needs of Holy Church.

"Towards the end of the half hour, or at the third quarter, one of the two fathers or brothers shall go to warn or awake those who have to replace them. The signal will be five strokes on the great bell, so that the new adorers shall come with fresh ardor to occupy their places, animated by a fervent zeal to repair, as far as they can, with the help of divine grace, all the injuries that the Person of the Incarnate Word receives, and has received, in the Blessed Sacrament, by numberless ungrateful creatures, or by those who are blinded by the errors into which they have fallen, or who have been born in infidel lands."

In Mother de Matel's plan, the Order of the Incarnate Word comprises priests or clerks, brothers converse, and lay-brothers or laymen. After two years of

noviceship they are admitted to profession, "and will make solemn vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and of living and dying in the Congregation of the Incarnate Word." The fathers wear a white soutane, the red scapular, on which is embroidered a crown of thorns in green silk, inclosing the name of Jesus, surmounted by a cross, and beneath, a heart pierced by three nails, with the words, *Amor meus*. The cincture is of red leather, in memory of the cords that bound Our Lord in His Passion. The choir mantle is red. Out of the house they wear a black cloak over the soutane.

The discipline of the Order does not call for extraordinary exterior penances; the fast of Friday and the discipline on certain days are at the discretion of the Superior, who should carefully take into account the occupations and health of his subjects.

The daily religious exercises are prayer, a visit to the Blessed Sacrament and the recitation of the office by chant or otherwise. The spirit of silence and retreat is one most urged by the rule, which seeks to favor prayer and work. To promote this, the Constitutions prescribe to the fathers a retreat every three months, or at least twice a year.

The Fathers of the Incarnate Word, in the foundation of their houses, and in the exercise of their functions, are entirely subject to the Ordinary. The vow of obedience in the profession is made to Our Holy Father the Pope, and to the Bishop of the diocese in which they are, so that the Holy Father and the Bishop dispose of their goods, their liberty and their life, when, and as they think proper, for the defense and propagation of the faith.

Each house is governed by a Superior, nominated by the Provincial, but to be accepted or confirmed by

two-thirds of the fathers of the community to which he is sent; he shall have been professed for at least six years. The same Chapter, by an absolute majority of votes, assigns him four consultors, "on whom the community depends in spiritual and temporal matters." The Superior and consultors hold office for three years, and appoint the principal officers of the house, such as Treasurer, Procurator, etc.

To form a province there must be fifteen houses, of which three are for the novitiate, probation and studies. Several provinces are united as a nation, if need be.

The Order is under a General, who appoints the national superiors for a three years' term, and they name the provincials, who hold office for four years. The General has for assistants a Procurator-general, and council, a Treasurer-general of the Order and a Secretary.

Every six months, in each house, the consultors and the fathers who appointed them "assemble to take an exact account of the good or bad conduct as well of the Superior as of the consultors, and other officers, and during eight days will examine the books and archives, appointing a commission of the most expert to that effect." The Superior will give the seals to the Dean, and he and the consultors will retire, not speaking to any of the house during the eight days; the inferior officers continue in their employments.

"After sufficient examination they will gladly confirm those who have been found faithful, and they will depose those who may have been found in fault, or who have been careless in their duties. Should there have been any falsely calumnious charges, the Visitor or the Provincial Chapter reverses the decision, and banishes the calumniators from the Congregation."

The Provincial Chapter is formed of delegates from each house named in the assembly above mentioned. This Chapter proceeds with regard to the Provincial and other officers of the province as was indicated for the chapter of each particular house, and, at the stated times, names the consultors and colleagues of the Provincial, deposes or replaces them as may be required. It elects two of the most ancient of the fathers, exclusive of the Provincial and those in chapter, to attend the National Chapter; the Provincial never leaving the province without the express order or command of his superiors. The same rules are observed in the National Chapter for the formation of the General Chapter.

This is a summary of the Constitutions laid down by the foundress for this branch of the Order of the Incarnate Word. The most ordinary respect for the mission which undoubtedly she had received from on high, the approval of prudent men, and of the enlightened directors of the time, forbid us to suppose that they were written except by a special inspiration. And then, setting aside such an injurious hypothesis, can it be believed that in God's designs they were destined to remain a dead letter, without fruit to His glory and the salvation of souls?

It is certain that up to this time the Order of the Fathers of the Incarnate Word has remained a mere project. The work was about to be commenced, M. de la Piardiére, named Superior of Paris, had taken it to heart and had begun to put in execution by the purchase of a house. His son, as postulant, had even asked on his knees from Mother de Matel the habit of the Order, when the civil wars and their consequent disorders, the death of Father Carré, and the departure of the foundress from Paris, first delayed, and finally compelled the abandonment of "an establishment,

which, according to appearances, was on the eve of accomplishment, being assured of protection and of suitable subjects to form a community, and which the great ones of the world were pleased to support with their authority."

The project has been taken up in our times by a missionary of great reputation and virtue.

A venerable religious of the convent of Evraux writes to us that "the Abbé Combalot had always dreamed of the founding of the Fathers of the Incarnate Word. He had erected a beautiful little church, finely decorated, furnished and provided with rich ornaments and sacred vessels, and a house containing twelve cells, to receive the fathers, all at his own expense.

"Monseigneur de la Tour d'Auvergne, who greatly loved the Incarnate Word, desired the establishment of this Order. Encouraged by this venerable prelate, his friend, and by a beautiful letter that he received from Rome, Father Combalot set to work. He was stopped by sudden and unforeseen circumstances.

Monseigneur Fruchaud, who died Archbishop of Tours, had, during his sojourn in the diocese of Limoges, earnestly approved the idea of constituting the Order. "I have always wished to see the Order of the Incarnate Word erected for men, because I profess a true devotion for Mather de Matel," wrote the Provincial of a great Order to a venerable prelate who had communicated to him his thoughts on the subject. But a greater argument for faithful souls who may read these pages will be found in the benediction given by a venerated Pontiff, Pius IX., to the project of restoration. We give an extract from a letter which this great Pope caused to be written by Monseigneur d' Aquila: "I have had occasion to lay before the Holy Father, in a private audience, the

beautiful plan of the Abbé Combalot for the congregation for the Missionaries of the Incarnate Word, which he designs to establish, and I can assure you that he heard the project with pleasure, praised the measures taken to that end, and sends his special benediction that the work may be resolutely carried to a successful issue.

"In the course of the conversation, His Holiness said: 'Ah, yes, the Abbé Combalot is a zealous missionary and does a great deal of good, but he should be a little less advanced in years, that he might see the fruits of the Institute which he proposes to establish.' I remarked that, although advanced in years, his mind, his heart and his love for the Church, were still young. "True, true, said His Holiness, and he repeated his benediction.

"Please to communicate this account to the Abbé Combalot, together with my respect and best wishes for his enterprise. The project is truly fine, and I wish him health and many years of life in which to realize it, now that he knows that it has received the blessing of the Vicar of Christ."

Why, then, should not this project be realized? It may be said that there are too many religious congregations in the Church. But this objection has not more weight now than it had against the last, the next to the last, or any other society founded in the Church, against which there was no other argument, and which it failed to prevent.

Who can be ignorant that, with an appearance of similarity of aim and means, God diversifies the end and mission, as in nature trees of the same class, but of different species, profusely serve our needs and pleasure.

Have not the great families of St. Dominic and St. Francis a number of points in common? At first sight, would not one think them the same? And yet they are only sisters, and Providence, in bringing them into the world at the same time, seems to warn us against vain fears of divine profusion.

On the other hand, the Order of the Incarnate Word and of the Blessed Sacrament, as Jeanne conceived it, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, and as we have sketched it in these pages, is far from wanting a special character. To offer to priests, in houses set apart to this end, a place of recollection, furnishing them, meanwhile, with substitutes who meet their responsibilities in their absence; to favor a life of solitude and labor for those souls who desire it; to consecrate one's self not to the education of an impoverished nobility, but to the collection and preparation for the priesthood of poor children and young men, who could never attain to it otherwise, on account of the poverty of their families; to concentrate for this noble purpose the entire force of a congregation, its influence and zeal, is not that an end that indicates a spirit sufficiently great to characterize a work?

And, who may affirm that these three great functions intended by Jeanne in order that it should reproduce the Incarnate Word in His triple life, laborious, solitary and evangelical, instead of being parts of one soul, are not to be different lots divided amongst members of the same family, who should thus be truly the Incarnate Word under different aspects, living these lives simultaneously in hearts that are grouped together in the same love. This living synthesis, uniting in itself the labors and graces of different Orders, as Christ unites in Himself all the features

of supernatural beauty that are divided out amongst the saints, is it an impossibility? can it never become a reality?

This is not the thought of the pious daughters of Mother de Matel. They long for the day that shall complete the family of which they are the first members, according to the divine plan of the Incarnation, which caused an Immaculate Virgin to be born into the world before it budded forth a Savior. Trusting in their hopes, we do not hesitate to say that we have shared them, and that the desire of communicating them to other souls, and of hastening their realization, had its part in inducing us to undertake the present work.

BOOK SIXTH.

LAST YEARS OF JEANNE DE MATEL, AND HER DEATH—1655–1670.

CHAPTER I.

FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE CONVENT OF LYONS TO THE THIRD VOYAGE OF JEANNE TO PARIS—1655–1663.

We left Mother de Matel, towards the end of 1655, when she had founded the Convent of Lyons, and might fairly be supposed to be at the end of her trials. It was but seeming; enlightened from on high, she knew that the hour of her greatest contradictions was striking.

In approaching this period of her life, let us frankly say that we are not in the least tempted to hide the truth or to conceal it by our reticence. That, in the ingratitude and persecution of which she was the victim, the deed often surpassed the intention; that some of the agitation was owing to misunderstanding, to ignorance, to natural defects of character, or to weakness, we do not deny. God saw all and judged it. . . . But we should think that we insulted the Order of the Incarnate Word, if, to extenuate the faults of some of its members, we were to deprive the foundress of the halo of her passion. The Evangelists did not seek for excuses, they gave facts. After all, if we find in this afflicting episode the denial of

Peter, we do not see the treason of Judas. And was it not said of the Apostolic Order the first, the holiest of all others, and in time devoted even to martyrdom, that : "*Discipuli omnes relicto eo fugerunt.*" *

"To understand fully this melancholy history," very judiciously observes the author of a notice of the Order, "we must not forget that, being divinely called to a kind of new introduction of the Incarnate Word into the world, Mother de Matel had to experience in her own person His human states and mysteries. So, if the Convent of Paris had a legitimate pretension to be her Jerusalem, borrowing too much of the spirit of the Jews, it raised for her a Calvary. For, having insisted on a Messiah, glorious in his temporal possessions, it lost its riches, together with the Messiah, after ignorantly crucifying Him in the person of Him Who gave it an existence." †

The Convent of Paris had continued to prosper under the direction of Mother of the Holy Ghost Nallard : "She was a woman of more than ordinary worth, who for many years had made a vow always to do that which God would show her to be the more perfect. She had a wonderful talent for governing souls, and for gaining the confidence of all those who had anything to do with her." ‡ Her death in 1655 was a great loss to the Order, and the beginning of serious disorders in her Convent. Mother de Matel was supernaturally warned of the event : Mother Nallard appeared to her on the day of her death, and respectfully knelt down as though to receive her blessing. "My daughters," said Jeanne, after the

* Matt. XXVI, 56. "Then the disciples all, leaving him, fled."

† "The Order of the Incarnate Word and of the Blessed Sacrament," by Father Joseph of Jesus. We shall often have occasion to refer to this work.

‡ Life by a Jesuit Father.

apparition, "How I fear the letters that are coming! What an affliction!" She was not mistaken. The news quickly came that the beloved sister had been carried off after twenty-four hours of sickness. Jeanne seemed more desolate than ever before, unless, perhaps, at the death of Elizabeth Grasseteau, and she felt obliged to excuse her sorrow by recalling the tears of St. Paul at the death of his friend, "though I was resigned to the divine will," and the supplications of Our Lord in His agony, though he was ready to drink the chalice of His Passion and death.

The sisters of the Convent of Paris, in announcing her death, entreated Jeanne to choose them another Superior from one of the houses of the Order, but she thought it useless to borrow elsewhere the aid they had at hand. She wrote to the Prior of the Abbey of St. Germain, Dom Spinaci, to be so kind as to see to the replacing of Mother Nallard, and intimated as her choice Jeanne de Jesus Belly. Intimidated by her own youth—she was scarcely twenty-three years old—the sister, whose worth and rare qualities were well known to the foundress, believed herself incompetent for the office. It would have been more comformable to simplicity and to the spirit of submission to have accepted the decision of Providence. She could not make up her mind to do so. It became necessary to choose another Superior, and the choice fell upon Jeanne of the Passion, Fiot, who accepted. But the burthen soon seemed to her too heavy; she begged Mother de Matel to relieve her, and the latter had to seek a Superior in another house. She wrote to the Right Rev. Bishop of Grenoble for permission to draw two sisters from the convent under his jurisdiction, one of whom would be Superioress at Paris. The prelate left her completely at liberty in her choice and dispositions.

What was not her astonishment on seeing the Superioress of the Convent of Grenoble and four other religious arriving from that convent in the autumn of 1656. The government of Mother Theresa Gibalin had not been as prudent and discreet as was requisite in a new foundation, and so, notwithstanding the opposition of many of her religious, and even of the Bishop, Mother de Matel had insisted on her being replaced in her office, after the two triennial terms, according to rule. Mother Calvary Gérin was called to the succession in 1650.

Several letters of Jeanne show that at first she fully enjoyed the confidence of the foundress. "Mother Gérin of Calvary," says Sister de Belly, who was in a situation to know her well, "was filled with the graces of heaven and earth so long as she was submissive to our worthy Mother, but, since she has withdrawn herself, especially since the contract of compromise which she brought about at our convent in Paris, August 18th, 1663, contrary to the intentions of our worthy Mother Foundress, the Incarnate Word seems to have visibly taken away His favor from the said Mother Gérin. Already, in 1655, a discreet warning revealed in Jeanne anxieties that were afterwards but too well justified. My confidence in the Providence of the Incarnate Word is well known in His Order," she wrote to her; "this I have received from His goodness, but that does not exclude prudence, which dictates that all should be done discreetly, and wisely weighed and measured in the balance of the sanctuary." And then, alluding to her desire to fill the convent with religious, accepted without discretion, and without regard to the necessary resources, she says: "Take care hereafter not to receive any without a sufficiency to clothe and feed them. I do not share your zeal, being content with

eight professed, four of whom I left at Paris; I still refuse others at Lyons, fearing to burthen the convents."

Evidently Mother Gérin was rather rash. However that may be, her appearance on the scene at this juncture in the general history of the Order, is the first station in the sorrowful way in which Mother de Matel was about to enter, never to leave it until she returned to God.

Having learned the intentions of the foundress, Mother Gérin persuaded the Bishop of Grenoble that it would be but proper for her to accompany her daughters to Lyons; she would also enjoy the consolation of seeing Mother de Matel. And so, taking with her four subjects whom she selected, and without permission of the foundress, without even warning her, she set out for Lyons. On seeing her, Jeanne gently said: "Truly, my daughter, what have you done? I asked for two religious, and you are five, without inquiring whether I am able to support the expense, and without knowing from me whether it is for the good of the Order. You should not have acted thus." The reprimand was not severe for so serious an infraction of the rules, and of the respect due to the foundress. The cunning sister was let off very easily, though she attempted a justification that would have justified nothing save to the charity of Mother de Matel.

But, divining the thought that suggested this manœuvre, Jeanne resolved to expose it. She returned to her first idea of putting Sister de Belly at the head of the convent of Paris, and to strengthen that hive, determined to send there two of the religious who had been brought to her, retaining the other two. The Superior of Grenoble had to return to her post. But, as she was ambitious of governing the Convent

of Paris, she did not go without instructing the religious, who were devoted to her, how they should act in order to second her designs.

Accompanied by Sister Gravier, on the 24th of November, they joined a pious company from Provence, and reached Paris on the 4th of December, 1656. Mother de Matel had enjoined her secretary to see the Prior of St. Germain, and, informing him of her nomination of Sister de Belly as Superior, to request him to impose the office upon her in spite of all repugnance. Jeanne de Belly perceived that a fresh refusal would be to resist the ordinance of God ; in submission, she took the post of authority, and in humility the first place. This was entering by the right door, and her direction was speedily blest. The name, the piety, the intelligence of Mother de Belly, gained for the Convent of the Incarnate Word the sympathy of the great and the generous. The convent, soon enriched by subjects remarkable for their birth and for other good qualities, assumed an importance that it had not previously had." *

From Lyons Mother de Matel sustained and directed her daughter, and helped her in the difficulties of her government. Having learned that the door of the convent had been too easily opened for the entrance of subjects destitute of the necessary guarantees for their religious fidelity, or who had come impelled by the necessities of communities destroyed during the war, she wrote : " May the Incarnate Word be our all in time and in eternity. It is the maternal and heartfelt salutation of your loving Mother, who is somewhat relieved from her constant sore eyes, so that, with her own hand and pen, as from her heart, she may assure you that your fidelity in her convent will be rewarded

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

by Him Who is truly the faithful witness, as St. John, His beloved, writes in the Apocalypse:

"Remember that I refused to Father Carré, with whose merit and virtue I was well acquainted, entrance for religious of different Orders, Abbesses, Prioresses and others, who wished to be received as boarders, one of whom would have paid 1500 livres pension money, with only one maid to serve her, and to whom I owed some obligations, because I knew that it was not the will of the Incarnate Word.

"I am still of the opinion that we should not receive great personages as boarders. The Incarnate Word said to His Apostles: Suffer little ones to come to me. When He wanted to teach the people He commanded the Apostles to move away that He might avoid the crowd; He lived thirty years with His Holy Mother and St. Joseph. I do not blame those who like to have a numerous community; it is their spirit." . . .

Jeanne spent the year 1657 in directing her different convents, especially in strengthening that of Lyons, where her presence and direction planted the seed of a vigorous religious life. Calumny still pursued her, going so far as to spread libellous reports against her. She defended herself only by patience and prayer. This was her sole revenge. One of her historians says: "She was like a rose amidst thorns, diffusing the sweet odor of her virtues. To love and to suffer were her only desire." On the other hand, her soul remained attentive to the communications from heaven, though the vision of glory was frequently shaded by the darker tints of the future which she foresaw.

In the course of the year 1658, before being dragged to the pretorium and Calvary, Jeanne had a hosanna of passing joy and triumph. She was summoned to Roanne for the settlement of certain family

affairs consequent on the death of her brother-in-law, and with the additional attraction of a possible foundation in that city. This project had long been one of her cherished dreams. She wished to consecrate to it all that she could dispose of after the accomplishment of so many works. The convent at Roanne would complete the mystic number of her houses by which she wished to honor the five wounds of Our Lord. There she would retire to receive the habit, end her days in solitude, in forgetfulness of self and the world of affairs; there where she had received her being, and where, as a child, she had been prepared by so many graces from God.

Full of this thought, Jeanne started for Roanne, attended by Sister Gravier, her faithful Secretary, who had returned from Paris. Let us listen to the account of her happiness: "My joy was great at witnessing the increase of devotion in the place of my birth, and I was inexpressibly happy in adoring Thee in the parish church where I had received the life of grace in the sacrament of regeneration. I renewed my prayers to Thy fervent and holy deacon, the first of Thy martyrs, St. Stephen, who had conferred on me so many favors, heaven having been opened to me so often in his church; I recalled the multitude of graces that I had received in the course of twenty-nine years. Thou, my divine benefactor, added to them new ones.

"On seeing this devout people, I remembered the tender love that St. John Chrysostom had for his people of Antioch, whose pastor he was. Having nothing equal to his dignity, I had the love of a shepherdess for Thy sheep and lambs with whom I am joined, in a holy and angelic manner, in a pious and more than natural companionship. Every thing charmed me, and I no longer felt my infirmities so sensibly. I seemed to have received new health and strength to

carry on Thy Order, and to promote Thy glory, the zeal of which so inspired the Curate and all the clergy of Roanne, the nobility, the great and little, as to fill me with satisfaction." *

Jeanne remained in her native city more than three months, from the 2d of May to the 8th of September, living in the house of her sister, near the church of St. Stephen. She frequently visited the college chapel, where she had received so many divine favors and had been so wisely directed. On the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, "after having," as she says, "communicated in the chapel of the Rosary, with an abundance of tears of joy, I received the blessing of the Curate, whom I regarded whilst there as my dear pastor, and took leave of those wise and pious clergymen. To my great confusion, I experienced a great unwillingness to bid them all farewell, until I had crossed the Loire, when Thou didst dry my tears, telling me that Thou hadst permitted this tenderness to show me that I was the spiritual daughter of that holy people, and their true fellow-citizen; that Thou hadst blessed them and wouldst continue to do so even to the end, fulfilling the promises made to me for Thy glory and their sanctification." * These were the promises to which she alludes: "Roanne shall receive great favors from My goodness, because it is the place in which thou didst receive great graces; it is My good pleasure to give it a share of My bounty, because I am good to thee, and I reward those who love thee." * These touching words are Jeanne's spiritual testament to her native city; may Roanne be ever worthy of them.

On arriving at Lyons, after a favorable journey, Mother de Matel found many sick, so that she was forced to assume again the office of cook, and to

* Autobiography.

undertake nearly all the employments of the Convent, without omitting her interior exercises, or her application to the holy mysteries, wrapt in mystic sleep in the midst of the pots and pans of the kitchen. Thus did the worthy Mother unite the offices of Mary and Martha." *

Whilst she was engaged in strengthening the Convent of Lyons by the example of a strong and deeply rooted humility, the demon of pride was working the ruin of that in Paris. Mother Gérin, as we have said, had charged the two sisters sent to that city to represent her as the one best adapted to advance the prosperity of that house. They were faithful to their mission. "It was," says an historian, more acquainted with the facts, and therefore more capable of judging them, "neither cabal nor intrigue on their part; it was sincere zeal and conviction." We are willing to believe it, but all the more earnestly do we subscribe to the reflections which follow the excuse: "It is on this same principle that parties are so often formed in communities which always end in degeneration, and are attended by the most deplorable consequences."

Ever diffident of herself, Mother de Belly was easily persuaded that another would more usefully occupy the post to which, against her own will, she had been called. On the other hand, M. de la Piardiére being on the point of setting out for Grenoble, they proposed to him to anticipate the time of election by three months, so that he could bring the new Superioress back with him. He consented. Mother de Belly then was deposed before the end of her term, Mother Gérin of Calvary being elected in her place, and the transaction was ratified by the Prior of St. Germain. And this, strange to say, was done without

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

consulting the foundress. The Convent of Paris was to pay for this infraction of the simplest rules of prudence, of submission and respect, by a disturbance of its peace at first, and, finally, by its existence.

Mother de Belly wrote to the foundress what had been done; M. de la Piardiére took charge of the letter, and conversed with her on the subject on his passage through Lyons. "My daughter de Belly," said Mother de Matel, "warns me too late. If she had told me sooner, I myself would have tried to go to Paris. Why have they precipitated this affair? My opinion is that Mother de Gérin is not at all suited to the post at Paris. The more I think of it, the less inclined am I to consent to it. I have asked God to make known to me His will; the Holy Spirit tells me that if she goes there she will ruin the convent." She mentioned another religious on whom she had fixed her eye. "Since you are going to Grenoble, you would do well to take her instead of Mother Gérin." M. de la Piardiére objected that, as things were, it was impossible to retrace his steps. "Be it then as you think best," answered Mother de Matel; "but I do not believe that you are very well satisfied, and God grant that you do not soon have reason to repent."

M. de la Piardiére did not yield, and brought Mother Gérin back with him from Grenoble. The latter was overjoyed at her success, and during her stay at Lyons developed her plans, brilliant plans she thought them to be, for the prosperity of the Paris house. Through respect for the decision of legitimate authority, through charity, and that she might not seem willingly to discourage her, Mother de Matel was content to say: "My daughter, let us do nothing hastily, or without consulting the Lord."

The new Superioress of Paris was not one to profit by such counsel. The Jesuit Father, whose account

we are following closely, as the only guide who can enlighten us on the subject, says of her : "She was one of those persons who live in a constant illusion, and see a pious motive in whatever flatters their inclinations. They do not wish to deceive, they are deceived ; they are not hypocrites, they are presumptuous. They think that their views cannot but be correct ; hence they are obstinate in their way, and in their own mind everything they do is done with a pure intention. They see the glory of God in everything that contributes to their own. In a word, their conduct has a good intention, as though inspired by the purest zeal, and yet bears all the appearance of the most egregrous self-love. Combine with this a nature that is restless and impulsive; and you have more than sufficient to overthrow a community." The portrait is drawn by a master hand ; but, what a misfortune for the family or the house that is committed to the guidance of such a soul.

At first all went well. So long as Mother de Gérin reposed on the reputation that had been made for her, the predictions of Jeanne appeared vain, but no sooner did she begin to act than she made herself known. Her first care was to remove the two religious who had so zealously given her a name at Paris, and to summon from Grenoble two others better suited to her purpose. Conscious that Mother de Matel did not approve of changes that were suggested by mere caprice, she dispensed herself from asking her approval. Without examining seriously into the state of the house, she began to change its arrangements, overturning one day, at a new expense, what she had inconsiderately erected the day before.

The spiritual interests were directed in a like manner ; and she did not hesitate to dry up the source of vocations, by unreasonable refusals, any more than

to ruin the house by useless expenses. "It is of no avail to argue with such characters; one must be absolute." She ruled her inferiors with such haughtiness and severity that they did not dare to contradict her. *

Seculars, being more free, did not fail to talk. The families of postulants refused without reason, or of those who were imprudently admitted, did so very freely. M. de la Piardiére, who at first had tried to defend her, found himself obliged to remonstrate. She punished him by sending to Lyons two of his relatives who had been brought up in the Convent of Paris, and who were desirous of consecrating themselves to God. He recognized at last that he had done wrong not to respect the advice of Mother de Matel, and concluded to send her word to come to Paris. He, himself, would have gone to invite her to make the journey, but that pressing business took him to Touraine.

At Loches he was attacked by a contagious disease, contracted in visiting and consoling the sick, and died regretting that he could not repair what he regarded as an injury done to Mother de Matel, and that he could not found a Convent of the Incarnate Word at Loches. The Daughters of the Incarnate Word have always venerated his memory, as of a friend to the Order. No one was more sincerely attached to the foundress, nor more zealous for the progress of the Institute. A man of lively faith, as proved by his fidelity to his vocation, and by his works, he joined to a spirit of great piety a generous and charitable heart, open ever to the inspirations of grace. In one word, he was a holy priest.

His premature death—he was but fifty years old—was a great misfortune for the Incarnate Word. It left the convent of Paris without direction at the very time

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

that it was most needed. Jeanne accordingly saw herself obliged to leave her quiet retreat, and to go to the relief of a state of things that could not be prolonged without danger. She yielded to the necessity, and prepared for her departure. One only consideration softened the bitterness of the sacrifice, and that was the certainty that she left the Convent of Lyons under the guardianship of one capable of preserving the spirit of fervor, and of governing with wisdom and zeal.

Two years before, in March, 1661, she had summoned from Avignon Sister Helen of Jesus Gibalin de Villard, who, with her sister Margaret Mary, was the soul of that convent, and, after having fulfilled several offices, had been made Mistress of Novices. The separation was painful to the two sisters, but, as true daughters of obedience, they were resigned, and Sister Helen of Jesus, on reaching Lyons, was made Superioress. She was given, for assistant, Sister Louise of Rhodes, who accompanied her from Avignon.

"Mother de Matel executed an act by which she obliged herself to pay to the Convent of Lyons the interest of the principal which she had promised in the contract of foundation, and she names the six religious, of whom, according to custom, she had been granted the nomination, and, having regulated all the spiritual and temporal affairs, she was ready to set out for Paris. She left her beloved community of Gourguillon the 3d of May, 1663, giving all her sorrowing daughters to understand that she did not expect to see them again in this world. She took with her Sister Mary Chaud, and Sister Mary Ann de Becy. The Rev. Prior Bernardon, the faithful companion of her previous journeys, also attend her on this occasion."*

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

The citizens of Roanne hoped that she was coming to realize their hope and hers by endowing a convent of her Order in their city. Many families were prepared to make sacrifices to this end, and vocations to the new Institute were on all sides declaring themselves. "Mother de Matel, more than others, desired to do what they asked of her. She was moved by the tears of many young maidens, who cast themselves at her feet, imploring this happiness. She mingled her tears with theirs; she gave them hopes, but, not being able at the time to bind herself to more, she continued her voyage." *

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

CHAPTER II.

MOTHER DE MATEL AND THE CONVENT OF PARIS. PERSONAL TRIALS AND PERSECUTIONS.

Mother de Gérin, concealing her displeasure at the appearance of the foundress, rendered her all the honors due to her title, and came to meet her with all the community, but she was embarrassed, and could not prevent herself from showing coldness in the reception. Jeanne, at the first glance, understood the salutation, but, with her habitual humility, she did not let it be seen. "May God be with us," she said to her daughters, on her meeting them; "I pray with all my heart that He may bless us, and that His spirit may rest on you and me, that we may all accomplish His holy will."

On leaving Lyons, Jeanne had said to her companions: "I am going to my execution." It began on the very day of her arrival. Mother Gérin had promised herself to add to the splendor of the house; she sought means to increase the revenue. This anxiety led her into an unfortunate step. She persuaded herself, and then the friends of the Order, the Community and the new Prior of St. Germain, Dom Ignatius Philibert, that at all cost Mother de Matel should be induced to renounce the right conferred in the act of foundation of naming six religious for the Convent of Paris, and be satisfied with one. Moreover, she should be persuaded to endow that convent with all that remained of her patrimony.

Such pretensions were contrary to all reason and justice, and the least tact would have prevented her

from fatiguing the foundress on the very day of her arrival. But impatient zeal is always indiscreet; Mother Calvary sought the first chance for an interview, and in the conversation exaggerated the bad condition of the temporal affairs. Then, having made known the arrangement agreed upon, she added that the new Prior of St. Germain might close the convent unless it were consented to. She ended by saying: "Think of it, Mother; you will be responsible before God for all the harm that you may cause us."

Mother de Matel, without feeling wounded at such language, answered: "My daughter, so far Superiors have seemed satisfied with me; I shall await the one whom you have named, and I will hear what he has to say, and I am resolved to do all that is just and reasonable; but I do not think that he will be apt to ask anything that is to my prejudice." Then, having recalled all her maternal affection for the Convent of Paris in particular, and the Order in general, she added, with a sigh: "Ah, my daughter, how much it has cost me! God alone knows how many tears I have shed, and what I have suffered. I see that you are not very grateful."

Jeanne was not slow to perceive that the direction of the Superioress was drawing the Convent of Paris into a path where the blessings promised to communities animated by the spirit of faith and humility could not attend it. The poor sister forgot herself so far as to order novenas for the conversion of the foundress, whom she represented to those without the convent, as to those within, as weakened in virtue by her attachment to riches. If there had been question only of her own reputation and advantage, Jeanne would have kept silence; but she was bound in conscience to protect the convent and the Order. She

proposed, then, at the close of Mother Gérin's three years term, to send her to another post.

The Superioress had foreseen this. Not having succeeded in persuading the foundress, she brought forward some of the friends of the Order. At her instance they called on the Prior of St. Germain, and represented to him that he ought not to let the affair be delayed, that the death of Mother de Matel before its termination might deprive the Order of the money still at her disposal. In particular, they urged him to oppose any measure which, by the removal of Mother de Gérin, would commit to Jeanne the government of the house. Was it becoming that religious should be governed by a secular?

Dom Philibert consented to everything. Not knowing Mother de Matel, save by the portrait they had drawn of her, he expected to find her absolutely opposed to any thought of generosity towards the Convent of Paris. He was greatly astonished to hear her fix, as the sole limit of her concessions, her conscience and the good of the Order. He asked her to sign a paper in accordance with his demands, and the conditions were agreed upon. Jeanne proposed, on her side, in the interest of the Convent of Paris, that Mother Gérin should be sent to Grenoble at the expiration of her term; but Dom Philibert could not see in this proposition anything more than an inspiration of jealousy.

In the minutes of the act consented to by Mother de Matel, "all the houses and gardens which she had acquired in Paris were ceded in perpetuity and unrestrictedly to the convent. Besides, she granted it a new fund of 2000 livres of rent, with this sole charge, that, during her natural life she should be allowed to live there, with a virtuous maid to serve

her ; that she should be fed and lodged, in health or sickness ; that in case she should wish to be received as religious, she should be admitted without dower ; that if she should be obliged to go to live in some other convent, that of Paris should give her a pension of 300 livres, and, lastly, that they should receive, without dower, the young de Brécy and another of her relatives, should they desire it, and be found fit according to the constitutions. This should be exclusive of the six religious whom she had the right to nominate in quality of foundress." *

The minutes of this donation were carried to the Prior of St. Germain, who appeared disposed to accept it. He had a copy of the different titles and contracts concerning the property in Paris given him, and sent the whole to the Superioress.

The drawing up of the contract did not satisfy her ; she thought they could do better. She wrote out another project, and Dom Philibert, notwithstanding his repugnance to disturb Mother de Matel, now that he knew her better, consented to present it. He did it with great delicacy. "Mother," said he, in the course of the conversation, your "Order has given you great trouble. You would do well now to think of rest, and leave the interests of the convent to the Superioress, who appears to be zealous and intelligent. It would, however, be important to make a declaration of the property that you leave to this house. It seems to me that some articles of the project that you sent me might be omitted, and others added. This is the plan, such as I conceive it," and he read to Jeanne the sketch of the plan as drawn up by Mother Gérin and her consultors.

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

There was no longer a question of the right of nomination by the foundress. The donation of the different pieces of property was said to be "for the acquittal of her conscience;" and, under the pretext of guarding against any possible claim on the part of Mother de Matel's relatives, they did not hesitate to insult her by transforming the gift of properties, bought by her own patrimony, into a restitution! "Father," she said, after reading it, "in this paper there are falsehoods that I neither can nor ought to suffer. How can I sign a paper that declares me to be possessed of another's property? Never have I been accused of such a thing, and never can it be proved of me." In his own mind the Prior was of the same sentiment; still, he essayed to persuade her, but, not succeeding, he left her to report his failure to the Superioress. She hastened, at once, by all sorts of arguments, by flattery and prayers, to bring the foundress to consent. It was useless. "Leave me," said Jeanne, "it is you who have drawn up this paper; I can never subscribe to the falsehoods that it contains."

One understands the outraged delicacy of Mother de Matel at the thought of allowing such a suspicion to rest on her memory; one that would represent the Order as a thing that was of mere personal and human interest. But, even though this were an exaggerated fear, was it not most unbecoming to forget her advanced age, her virtues, her labors, her life and her patrimony expended for the good of the Order, her title of foundress, all that called for the greatest respect? Mother de Gérin could not see this. She waged against her, by herself and by others, whom she had adroitly gained over to her side, a long and relentless assault. Going still farther, she skilfully kept away the friends of Jeanne, through fear of their influence;

and, when a refusal would have been too bold, or have been taken amiss, she accompanied her to the parlor, not ashamed to conceal her mean suspicions under the pretext of an attentive interest in her least actions.

It was not without a merciful design on the Order of the Incarnate Word that Providence permitted this trial and those that followed. Many beautiful pages enrich its annals, and who knows but what the virtues related in them were the glorious compensation for a fault, altogether personal besides, in the first days. Mother de Matel was made to leave, in her heroic example, better than all prescriptions, two rules essential to the religious life: *Never to reveal outside the troubles of the community; in the community, no matter what happens, never, by confidences that are always dangerous, to make known wounds that one soul may inflict on another.*

And, as Mother de Matel did not accuse these her daughters to others, neither did she do so in her own heart. She did not allow a single word to escape her that could diminish the authority of the Superioress, and, if some kept apart from her through weakness, rather than malice, she understood their feeling, and scarcely made them a maternal reproach, while she pardoned them.

Not being able to procure the signing of her famous contract, Mother Gérin had recourse to a childish subterfuge. She sought to entreat from Jeanne a *promise* to give her property to the Convent of Paris. She imagined that, when once this promise was made, they would have the right to exact Mother de Matel's signature, and it would then be true to say that she consented to this donation and restitution of rents *for the acquittal of her conscience*, since she would be under the obligation of a promise. It was to this intent she had Mother de Matel visited at intervals by a religious

whose authority she thought would triumph over her resistance. Referring to the paper that they wished her to sign, he ventured to say : "You are obliged to do it for the glory of God, for your own honor's sake, for the consolation of your daughters, and for the edification of the people."

Jeanne knew how to be firm when it was necessary : "Father," she answered, "I see nothing in what you have said that can determine me to sign a contract that contains falsehoods, and which is to my prejudice. I have examined myself before God, and I can bear witness of myself that I have never held the property of others. I have never touched the dowries of my daughters, and I owe them no restitution. Since I founded them, I have lodged, furnished, fed and maintained them in health and sickness, in time of war as well as peace, present or absent. I have never received for them but two thousand livres from the Chancellor ; that sum was expended in building the Church, and I have accounted for it. I have not repented of having done them good ; on the contrary, I am disposed to do more for them. All that I have said is merely to prove to you that, having nothing that belongs to them, nor to anyone else, I am not obliged to restitution. The terms of the contract, therefore, that you would have me sign, are injurious. I reject it as dangerous to the existence of this house, which might eventually be prosecuted for having monies that did not belong to me." We may here remark the supernatural prudence of Jeanne ; the fear of this danger was to be amply justified by events.

The conversation was prolonged for three hours, when the Superioress transformed it into a tragedy. Wearied of standing sentinel at the door to prevent interruption, she entered the parlor, and, casting herself at the feet of Mother de Matel, implored her to

sign a promise of donation to the convent, assuring her that she could keep it in her own hands until the authentic act should be executed. "Why," said Jeanne, "would you have me act in this underhand way? All that I have done for my convents, I have done publicly and legally. Why should you be so suspicious? Who, more than myself, can desire the good of this house?" The religious, who was present at this scene, had knelt down and was praying; Jeanne, in her confusion, imitated him, and at last, not convinced, but overcome, she signed the note that the Superioress held out to her, which contained these words: "I promise God to give my daughters of Paris the houses that they occupy, and 2000 livres of rent."

This victory for the moment filled the intriguing Superioress with a childish joy. Relating it as though it were a stroke of Divine Providence, she added: "This is to what we have been reduced by the present state of our foundress, and the stratagems we are forced to employ. Her mind is much weakened, and we have to have recourse to tricks." Jeanne had wished to be surfeited with opprobrium, and to pass for a fool; she had reason to be satisfied, and, in fact, she rejoiced before God.

But, if she was not tired of suffering, Mother Gérin, encouraged by this partial success, was not tired of preparing for her new trials. She wished by all means to obtain her signature to a contract such as she had conceived it, and, to render the resistance of Jeanne odious, she spread the report that, unless it were done, the Prior of St. Germain would close the convent. This news spread consternation in the community. Sister de Belly owed everything to Mother de Matel, she had not ceased to venerate her, and she had kept apart from her in a spirit of prudence that was too human, but

now she could hold out no longer, and came to her all in tears. Jeanne was praying before the Blessed Sacrament ; she called her aside. "Oh, Mother, what do I hear ! They are going to close our convent, because you refuse to declare your intentions in our regard ? Oh, Mother, save us !" Jeanne saw that Sister de Belly gave utterance to the common thought. She cast a tender glance upon her, and once more renewed the protestation so often repeated, of her sincere disinterestedness, of her affectionate dispositions towards the Convent of Paris. "Have I not for you deprived myself of every thing, and reduced myself gladly to poverty, although, in obedience to my superiors, I have not as yet pronounced the vow ? I ardently desire your spiritual good ; I have at heart the temporal prosperity of the house. I only ask to be allowed to act according to the lights that God has given me." Then, casting her prophetic eye upon the future, she gave utterance to one of those terrible predictions that she was so often to repeat with tears. "Daughter, daughter, I was groaning there ; I was praying Our Lord to enlighten those persons whom Mother Calvary is influencing, but I fear that I shall not prevail. They will not believe me. Ah, what grievous misfortunes are about to befall this house for having been so eager for temporal goods." The Superioress was made acquainted with this interview. Intimidation had failed, she erected new batteries.

The Prior Berardon had followed Jeanne to Paris and continued to be her confessor. He had been long acquainted with her interior state, and so entirely deserved her confidence that she consulted him even in temporal affairs. Mother Gerin took it into her head to deprive her of this help. She denounced him to Dom Philibert as a dangerous man, whose obstinacy encouraged Mother de Matel. She succeeded so well that

the Prior sent for M. Bernardon, and, after many reproaches, forbade him to confess his old penitent or to say Mass in the church of the convent. In his agitation M. Bernandon came and told everything to Jeanne, declaring that he could no longer visit her; and, in fact, some days after he left without saying farewell.

The confessor of the community, at that time, was a young priest who had every confidence in the Superioress, and was desirous to serve her. He had little experience of souls. Without taking into account the extraordinary ways in which she had been led, her supernatural lights, the decisions of her previous directors, he treated her as a novice, and repeated, by way of exhortation, the lesson that had been taught to him, the harm done to the community, the account she would have to give for her opposition, the bad reputation she was making for herself, and even forbade her to communicate without applying to him, each time, for permission. He had given her clearly to understand that he would think it no harm to refuse her; but the humility of the holy foundress disarmed him, and she did not think this daily act of obedience too dear a price to pay for a favor which the Incarnate Word did not allow her once to miss, according to His promise.

There was another privation by which Jeanne could be made to suffer, and it was not spared to her. Sister Francis Gravier had been her companion in all the vicissitudes of her life, and served her as secretary. "In spite of the persecution of her family, she had given herself to her when she was fifteen years old, and now for forty years had served her in everything with the greatest zeal and fidelity." * They determined to remove her. Mother Gérin found good reasons

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

for sending Sister Gravier away for a few days; they were ever the same ; it was necessary to leave Jeanne to the freedom of her own inclinations. Dom Philibert consented, and sent one of his religious, Dom Arsene, to communicate their decision to Mother de Matel. The envoy found her as usual, with her crucifix in hand, relieving her heart in loving colloquies. Without any preamble, he said : "I have the orders of the Superior to remove Sister Gravier from the convent for some days ; he judged it necessary for the good of the house." "Father," answered Jeanne, "I have a profound respect for the authority of the Superior, and, if I were alone concerned, I would make the sacrifice without another word, no matter how much I needed her services. But, we must not forget that she is one of the oldest of the Congregation. She has abandoned everything for the good of the Order ; she has shared my labors and sufferings in its establishment. I had promised her parents to make her a religious ; up to the present time I have not been able to give her that consolation, but would it not be a crying ingratitude to repay her affection and sacrifices with exile ?"

Without attending to her representations, Dom Arsene had Sister Gravier summoned and intimated the decree. "Father," said the poor girl, weeping and casting herself at his feet, "inflict whatsoever penances you please upon me, but do not separate me from so good a mother." The religious was moved ; he tried to soften the hardship by exhorting her to patience, promising that the separation should be but for a few days only. Madame de Cogneux, one of the friends of the Order, willingly received her for a while, until all should be arranged. No confidence could be placed in such promises ; the two friends knew it but too well, but against such a decision resistance was useless. Mother de Matel tenderly embraced her

faithful companion : "So, my daughter, submit to the will of God, and ask no help save that of His grace, and be faithful to His love."

Sister Gravier left the convent and Madame Cognieux received her. This new victory did not have the results that the Superioress had expected. We shall see her resorting to fresh intrigues, in favor of a project inspired by self-love, under the specious appearance of a zeal that was too bitter to have come from God.

CHAPTER III.

MOTHER DE MATEL AND THE CONVENT OF PARIS. PERSONAL TRIALS AND PERSECUTIONS CONTINUED.

Madame Dumas heard from M. Bernardon, as he passed through Roanne, the vexations to which her aunt was subjected. Her husband insisted on her going to Paris to judge for herself, and accordingly she set out, accompanied by M. Severat, her relative, and a nephew of Mother de Matel.

Jeanne, as usual, discreetly covered over the faults of the Superioress, and made no complaint. Mother Gérin was not so reserved. At first she was alarmed and startled by their unexpected visit, but she soon gained over the relatives of the foundress, by her attentions, and they recovered from the anxieties that had suggested the voyage. She gave Madame Dumas to understand that, if she could induce her aunt to sign the famous contract, she would be left in undisturbed possession of a remnant of the patrimony, then in her hands, subject to a small pension in behalf of Sister Gravier. The good lady was not insensible to a proposition that would improve her own position. So, when Sister Gravier called on her to enlighten her on the true state of the case, she found her almost entirely gained over to the views of the Superioress, and met with a very cold reception.

Under pretext of taking precautions against the future, the Superioress returned to her first idea of the contract. The better to gain her point, it was agreed that they should promise Mother de Matel all that she

asked, as preliminary conditions to the act, with the intention, on reading it to her, to pass lightly over those articles that could give her offense. Then there occurred a deplorable scene. A notary was summoned on the 18th of August, 1663, and, without attending to the observations of Mother de Matel, he drew up the contract in the parlor, in presence of the Prior, Dom Philibert, his secretary, Dom Arsene, the counsellor, Poucet, and Mother Gérin. Jeanne asked to see the contract, and it was hastily read to her; in vain did she try to rectify some assertions, to protest against some dispositions; the notary did not pause, and the conspirators contented themselves with remarking to her, "that it was late, that they must hurry, and that all should be right."

"O, my God," said Jeanne to herself, recalling to memory the Passion of her Spouse, "the Jews saluted Thee as King, while smiting Thee on the face; they cover me with flattery in this paper, they proclaim me foundress and institutrix of the Order; and when I open my mouth to speak in favor of truth and justice, I am a nobody. Be Thou eternally blessed, O God of my heart."

After the lecture, the Prior and his secretary signed the act, and then invited Mother de Matel to affix her signature. She refused. "I can not do it; you have paid no attention to my protests against certain clauses which I regard as injurious to my reputation and to the Order itself."—"Those words," said the Prior, "have been inserted to serve as a guarantee against any possible reclamation of your family, and the note that you signed, promising before God to make the donation to the monastery, justifies you." "But, who knows of this note? No mention is made of it, and, though you promised me, there is no allusion made to it. The first quality of every contract is, that it should

be clear," she insisted, and pointed out that the sacrifice exacted of her was not necessary to the security of the house. Then the Prior, tired out by her protests, rising, said: "Mother, sign; I command it."

"Dom Philibert was not her Superior, since she was not a religious; but obedience, which she had always practiced, though she had not taken the vow, overcame her repugnance. She went down on her knees to offer God the sacrifice of her own judgment, and she signed the contract as it was." *

Mother Gérin thought that she had gained a great victory. It was soon to be seen that the surest pledge of blessing to a house is the spirit of simplicity and obedience, and the most skillful human combinations are no substitute for it. God soon showed that the trials of Mother de Matel were not the legitimate consequences of her persistence, but were permitted for her sanctification. She had hoped that in return for her concessions she would regain the presence of her old secretary, Sister Gravier, desirous on her side to rejoin her. The Superioress lost no time in contriving her banishment to Lyons. Her pretext to Dom Philibert was the peace of the convent; to Mother de Matel she pleaded the will of Dom Philibert. The want of means for Sister Francis Gravier might be an obstacle; she appealed to the same authority, as a decisive argument, to impose on the foundress the settlement of an annual pension, to be paid to her by Madame Dumas, who would keep in her own right the sum of 4000 livres, of which she was the depository. Mother de Matel was thus herself made the instrument to send away those who were dearest to her, and, by depriving herself of her last resources, to destroy all possibility of freeing herself from the situation in

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

which she was placed. But her submission to the will of Providence would have been sufficient to keep her. "She had been conducted in this path of suffering by the will of God ; she would not leave it without a fresh order from Him." *

Notwithstanding her tears and entreaties, Sister Francis Gravier had to set out for Lyons. One more of her daughters, one of the oldest in the Congregation, Sister Mary Chaud, remained with Mother de Matel ; she had not yet made her profession. Being very much attached to her, she was displeasing to the Superioress, who sought a pretext to send her away. Mother Calvary found such a reason in the frank and somewhat rude remarks which Sister Mary Chaud made in favor of Mother de Matel. But, as the sister was very favorably regarded outside, she feared the bad effect of her departure, and this consideration was more efficacious than the representations of Mother de Matel on the virtues of her companion, and the forty years of services she had rendered to the Order.

As for Sister de Belly, as she had been careful not to oppose the Superioress, she had been given to Mother de Matel as a secretary, in place of Sister Gravier. Our historian says that "she feared one and loved the other, and so allowed neither one to perceive her real sentiments, which she had never changed. If she had freely condemned the Superioress, or openly defended the foundress, she would have been prevented from doing what she was inspired to do by a sense of duty that she had never forgotten." *

This conduct, in which, perhaps, human prudence had too great a share, was for a time a new source of grief to Mother de Matel. Deceived by the apparent reserve of one whom she so tenderly loved, she was

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

pained by the thought that her daughter had accepted the office of a spy on her words and conduct. One day, no longer able to suppress her sorrow, she affectionately reproached her. It was the last drop to the brimming cup. "Mother," she answered, giving way to her tears, "I am more to be pitied than you think. Until this moment I have concealed in my own bosom the weight of sorrow that oppresses me; but I can no longer bear it, I must cast it off. Although fear has prevented me from manifesting it, I have always loved you as I should. I was a coward, but not unfaithful. Your daughters in this house are nearly all of the same sentiment. One person alone is the cause of all your suffering, and even she thinks herself inspired by zeal; God grant that she may recognize her injustice."

The explanation was balm to the heart of Mother de Matel, who consoled Mother de Belly and restored to her all her confidence. The pious sister tried, on her side, to comfort one who entertained for her a mother's love. "She spent with her all the time that was left after her other employments, and, to recreate her, some times sang the canticles she loved, and, at others, read such things as suited her state." *

Mother Gérin, sincerely devoted to her Order, as we must confess, despite her faults, was not long in receiving a first chastisement that reacted on the convent. She had at heart the registration of the letters patent of the Convent of Paris. Many unsuccessful attempts had been made in this direction. She endeavored to engage M. Séguier to conclude the affair, but the Chancellor, being offended by what he had heard of her conduct, would have nothing to do with it. This was enough to anger still more the Superioress. Henceforth it was enough to know

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

that Jeanne favored any step to set her against it. Thus, she refused as postulants, because they were presented by friends of Mother de Matel, a young lady of illustrious birth, of great merit and solid vocation, a niece of M. de Lamoignon, the first President of Parliament, and, later, the two daughters and niece of M. Maurin, a person of distinguished birth, employments, and connections.

These and other similar extravagances opened the eyes even of those who had most esteemed her. Her triennial term was about to expire, and it was evident that she would not be re-elected. She wished at least to influence the choice of the Superioress and succeeded in securing the election of Mother Sorel, who was in charge of the Convent of Grenoble, and whom she went to replace, 1665.

Her name will not appear again in these pages. We have not thought well to conceal it, as those who have preceded us ; we have wished neither to screen her fault, nor to diminish her blame. Why, indeed, should we, whilst recognizing her good intentions, be blind to her want of honesty? Why should we not have confidence in our readers? Jeanne spread the mantle of mercy over the want of judgment, the illusions and faults of her daughter; so mothers do. But it was our duty to see and to make known the patience and sweetness of the mother, and in doing this we wished to instruct and to edify. If the religious life sometimes suffers from the sallies of a nature that is guilty of weakness, we must be made to see what heroism of charity, humility and mutual support it engenders to counteract them. The world, on the other hand, has no right to cry out, and to condemn them ; that which wounds us is common to it. It creates, it too often applauds such proceedings ; in its service many have abused them, or cruelly suffered by

them. If, once in a way, they scandalize us in the cloister, it is because they are in such contrast with its habitual smoothness, and the calm and serene regularity of its life.

The new Superioress had, at first, the greatest regard for the foundress, and gave her a great pleasure in the recall of Sister Gravier. But hers was a feeble nature, afraid to disoblige, incapable of making a stand, with whom every one was in the right, and no one found justice. This they knew, and she was not long in proving it.

Sister de Belly asked her to rectify the contract imposed upon Mother de Matel. She saw in this a satisfaction due to the foundress, and a pledge of the benediction of heaven ; eminent lawyers had found in it clauses that might eventually be prejudicial to the convent. Mother Sorel was eager to comply with her request. She proposed the change to the Prior of St. Germain ; Dom Philibert, on his part, sent Dom Arsene, his secretary, to give his reasons for maintaining the contract. She accepted them, as she had previously agreed to the contrary reasoning, and, partly through her natural irresolution, partly through a fear of angering Mother Gérin, she left things as they were, and contented herself with repaying Mother de Matel with good words and a display of affection.

In the same way she compromised a much more serious affair. Madame de la Chambre, a devoted friend of Mother de Matel, had secured for the Order the sympathies of M. du Bourg, the Master President of the Parliament of Bordeaux. Mother de Matel, by request of the Superioress, had resolved to employ his influence in securing the homologation of the letters patent for the foundation of the convent. M. du

Bourg seemed honored by this confidence, and took the affair to heart. The letters were invalid by proscription; he succeeded in obtaining permission from the Dean of the Counsellors to have them brought up again for reinvalidation. M. de Harlay, the Procurator-General, to whom he gave the documents, promised him a favorable issue, but, as he was then engaged in a personal suit of much importance, M. du Bourg thought it best not to urge too earnestly the execution of his promise.

Mother Sorel lost all by her impatience. Being persuaded that M. du Bourg would not be earnest in his action, and that M. Lemoine, the confessor whom Mother de Matel had requested to see him on this affair, took little interest in it, she withdrew the papers confided to M. du Bourg. When, after serious remonstrance on her imprudence, she would have restored them, it was too late; M. du Bourg was so much hurt that he refused to have anything more to do with it.

This mistake was the more to be regretted, inasmuch as a short time afterwards Parliament passed a decree "forbidding the reception of any letters of institution, and the reception of postulants in any convent for either sex, or of novices to their profession, until such houses had produced their titles, and the original contract for the foundation, with an exhibit of their temporal state before a commission deputed by the court for the visitation of convents." After this decree they had to give up all hope of a registration.

Wearied out by these struggles, Mother Sorel thought only of quitting Paris. At Grenoble she had left an excellent name, the presence of her family assured her great influence, and Mother Calvary had not proved a success. Influential persons, notably M.

Ribert, Counsellor of the Parliament of that city, a zealous friend of the convent, in which he had three daughters as novices, urged Jeanne to restore to them Mother Sorel. "She has taken away with her the peace and tranquillity that reigned in this community ; Mother Gérin has brought poverty, and constrained parents to use all their credit to remove their daughters. There is but one remedy to so great an evil, but one means of closing the wound ; it is the return of Mother Sorel. If your charity refuses our humble request, the house will have to be closed."

Jeanne had to yield to these instances. She would have wished to commit her convent at Paris to the guardianship of Mother Mary Margaret Gibalin de Villard, whose eminent sanctity, intelligence and sweetness had made the Convent of Avignon a model for all the communities of the city, a sanctuary of piety, humility and charity. The Archbishop would not consent. "Then the foundress cast her eyes on Mother de Belly. As though prescient of the trials that awaited her, the pious sister long resisted, but, yielding finally to the prayers and authority of Mother de Matel, she accepted, through obedience, in spite of her repugnance, the heavy burthen imposed upon her. (1667)." *

Immediately after her entrance into office, she set about that which she had advised—the reformation of the contract imposed upon the foundress. Her just and loyal heart told her how wrong it was to represent, as a restitution enjoined by her conscience, that which was a gift of Mother de Matel's simple, generous will ; to declare her released from a sum of 18,000 livres, as though it were a debt remitted, when the accounts clearly showed how it had been employed ; and to

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

deprive her of the nomination of six religious, accorded by the contract of foundation, at the very time that she had tripled that foundation. She insisted on this with the new Prior of St. Germain, but in vain. Influenced by Dom Arsene, who still resided in the monastery, the Prior refused to reopen the affair.

This check was soon followed by another no less sensible. Notwithstanding the decree of which we have spoken, and the urgent representations of their families, the postulants and novices of the Incarnate Word had persisted in their refusal to leave their beloved solitude. Touched by their perseverance, and anxious for the future of the house, Mother de Belly endeavored to obtain permission for them to make their profession. She appealed to the most influential personages, but uselessly. To all her solicitations they opposed delays, until the majority of the families, tired of a situation that seemed as though it would never change, obliged their daughters to quit the convent.

For Mother de Matel this was a great grief. She never ceased her sighs ; holding in her hands the crucifix, and kissing it, she would say : "O, my God, must these young victims, destined to Thy service, return to the world from which Thy merciful goodness had withdrawn them ? Take them, O Lord, under Thy protection, and permit them not to perish."

Mother de Belly wished to compensate the foundress in some measure for all these trials by procuring her the permission, refused to her daughters, of making her profession. M. d'Imonier, her relative, was secretary to the Cardinal de Vendome, legate of the Holy See. By his intervention, she received, on the 6th of July, 1668, a bull, authorizing Mother de Matel to make her profession whenever she pleased, and dispensing her from the year of noviceship. In this document

the Holy See again proclaims her foundress and institutrix of the Order of the Incarnate Word.

This favor filled Mother de Matel's heart with joy; but, obeying the rule that she had set for herself, she would not profit by it without consulting her directors. Considering the precarious state of the house, and the exigences of a situation that might make her freedom from vows useful to the whole Order, they all advised her to await the enregistration of the letters patent. This delay, says an historian, caused her many tears, but the love of obedience overcame her regrets. Her regrets were the more poignant, because, by an interior light, she knew beforehand the inutility of all efforts, at that time, to regulate the situation for the Convent of Paris.

And yet, humanly speaking, there was almost a certainty of success. "It is surprising," says an historian, "that the affair should have held out so long, when we consider the number and rank of those who favored it. Besides those already mentioned, the Duchesses d'Harcourt, and de Noialles, the Marchioness de Rogant, Monsieur and Madame de Rossignol, the Abbé d'Argentan, the Princess de Conti, were so many supports on whom the Daughters of the Incarnate Word could rest their hopes. The Duchess de Noialles had spoken in their favor to the Archbishop of Paris, and that in the warmest terms. "Their church," she would say, "is my little parish. I see there God well served. The Divine Office is celebrated with a regularity and fervor that delight me; if you wish to oblige me, you will declare yourself in favor of that community." *

M. de Péréfixe gave assurance that there was nothing to fear. The Bishop of Bazas, on his part,

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

employed all his authority, the influence of his virtue, and the activity of his zeal, in gaining to them the prelates of his acquaintance. Through his means, the Procurator-General, and M. de Morengis, specially deputed for the affairs of religious houses, promised their favor, and the Duchess of Orleans herself cast into the balance the weight of her recommendation in their behalf. "But," says the historian just cited, "all arms of flesh are too feeble when God withholds His hand. And so Mother de Matel continued to sigh. From all parts they hastened to her with good news; they were contradicted by an interior oracle that warned her of calamities visible to no one else. "Alas," she would say, "all the favors of men cannot gladden me, when God reveals to me only an abyss. Ah, what will become of this unfortunate house!"

"These fears were but too well founded; the storm was brewing, and, after so many trials, God reserved for her last moments the hardest of all, the entire ruin of the convent so dear to her." *

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

CHAPTER IV.

JEANNE DE MATEL AND THE CONVENT OF PARIS. TRIALS OF THE HOUSE.

On the 19th of March, 1670, the Parliamentary Commission charged with the visitation of religious houses called at the Convent of the Incarnate Word. They found everything in good order, and made a favorable report to the Archbishop.

Nevertheless, there being a rumor to the effect that the house was to be suppressed, or its status modified, Mother de Matel thought proper to take measures in consequence. She put in the hands of the Commission a declaration whereby she made known to the Archbishop that, in case of its suppression, "she intended to reserve, and by these presents did reserve, all the means that she had given to the foundation, of whatsoever kind, to be by her disposed of as property of her own." By the advice of prudent friends she added to this precaution, and, for all eventualities, a donation of all her goods, in the present, and in the future, to Sister Francis Gravier, with a protest before a notary against anything prejudicial to her rights, to those of her convent, and of her institute. Finally, she again presented a petition to the Parliament for the homologation of the letters of the King, granted in 1643, and since renewed.

These were wise measures. But intrigue, passion and weakness were about to combine for the ruin of a house that was the fruit of so much devotion and sacrifice.

The Parliamentary Commission had brought to the notice of the Archbishop a number of religious houses that were without letters of institution, assured resources, obliged to receive as boarders persons of the world whose habits were ill adapted to the regularity of a religious community. Their opinion was, that it would be prudent to suppress these convents, and to reunite the members in one common house, the Superioress of which should be named by the Ordinary. M. de Péréfixe approved this suggestion, and thought of naming to the charge in question, Mother Elizabeth Petit, called Mother of St. Ursula, a religious of the Convent of the Assumption, Rue St. Honoré. "Fifteen years before, she had left her convent to found in St. Germain a house that had never flourished. The Most Reverend Archbishop had often promised her a better situation. It was on her that he cast his eyes as the Superioress of the new house, in which it was contemplated to reunite the suppressed religious. As he had been informed that the Convent of the Incarnate Word was the largest and most convenient, he resolved to select it for the reception of the remnants of the dispersed communities." * The Archbishop sent a notice of the intended arrangement to the Sisters of the Incarnate Word. In proposing it, he assured them that it would entail no burden on them, since Mother Elizabeth and her two nieces, who were to accompany her, would bring their dowries. The Superioress wished to take the sense of her own community, and at once spoke to Mother de Matel. "Ah, my daughter," said the foundress, weeping, "how this house will be upset! It would seem as though everyone could lay claim to, and appropriate it, and yet I gave it to you alone. It was not without reason that God revealed to me nothing but abysses when I

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

have prayed for you. The affair of which you speak will suffer much contradiction ; if it succeed, I will give praise to God.''

This was not blaming the design of the Archbishop, and the community and its friends in the world found it acceptable. Mother St. Ursula was a woman of merit and virtue. ''She had formerly wished to consecrate herself to God in our Order,'' said Jeanne. ''I have always had great affection for her, and perhaps, Our Lord wishes to restore what had once appeared to have been taken away from us.''

They had not taken the intrigues of others into account. The Convent of the Incarnate Word had once given hospitality to a religious of Burgundy, called Madame Lenet. She had come to Paris to assume possession of a Priory of the Benedictines, of St. Magdalen which, had been conferred on her. These religious desiring for their Superioress, a member of their own Order, had opposed her intrusion. The cause was pleaded before Parliament. Whilst awaiting its decision, Madame Lenet had obtained of its Superior permission to reside in the Convent of the Incarnate Word, and had sought to conciliate its sympathy. When she lost her suit, instead of returning to her old Convent at Chatillon, as she had been ordered to do, she contrived to remain on the spot, and to wait, in the Convent of the Paraclete, a favorable opportunity of realizing a hope, that she had conceived, of one day governing the house of the Incarnate Word.

Madame Lenet had artfully gained, to the cause of her ambition, the Prior of St. Germain, and, although, by an act of the 20th of September, 1668, which placed the Faubourg St. Germain under the jurisdiction of the Ordinary, this religious had no longer any authority

over the convent, yet, as Vicar-General of the Archbishop, he possessed a certain influence, which, unintentionally no doubt, he used for the ruin of the house.

Wishing to insure the direction to Madame Lenet, he began by trying to circumvent Mother de Belly and Mother de Matel. M. Lenet, the brother of the pretendant, and a gentleman of the house of the Prince de Condé, often came to visit them. He set himself to work to depict the dangers that threatened the convent, and offered them, as a powerful support, his influence with the Prince. The Prior, on his side, played the same game. He represented himself as very anxious for the welfare of the house, and advised them to receive the members of other Orders in order to increase the personnel. The one and the other seemed to expect a proposition in favor of Madame Lenet, which no one thought of making. Meanwhile, they heard of the Archbishop's intention in regard to Mother St. Ursula, and resolved to take prompt measures. M. Lenet asked, as a special favor, that the Prince de Condé should obtain for his sister the nomination of Superioress to the Convent of the Incarnate Word, and the Prince promised to do so. The Archbishop strove to evade the request, but in vain. He complied, to his great regret, and gave notice thereof to Mother de Matel. A few days after he published an order suppressing all the little communities, and naming the Convent of the Incarnate Word as the asylum of the religious. The Parliament, in turn, passed an act which was made public on the 17th of July, 1670. It was there said that the convent would remain established under the name of the Incarnate Word, to be governed by religious of St. Augustine, but no novices should be received until further notice. The furniture belonging to the suppressed convents should be con-

veyed there, and the pensions of the religious should be paid to it.

This mingling of religious meant ruin ; the intrusion of such a person as Madame Lenet, could only hasten and consummate it. Mother de Matel called together the friends of the Order, who were then in Paris, many being absent. All were of opinion that the last stroke should at least be warded off, by asking of the Archbishop permission to elect a Superioress, and in case of a refusal, to give the three juridical summons, after which they could safely proceed to an election. Neither the prelate, who had gone to the country, nor his Vicar-General, having answered the first two citations, they appointed the day and the hour for the election.

At the third citation the Vicar-General, with the Promoter of the Archbishop, came to the convent. He ordered Mother de Belly to render her accounts. "Father," said she, "I will do so as soon as the Superioress, whom we are about to elect, shall be installed. Besides, although I greatly respect the Promoter, I do not recognize his right here, and I am surprised that, you have given him the trouble to come, for you know that through the grace of God, we have been guilty of no crime."—"It is not as Promoter that he is present, but as an official, desirous to know how you are disposed."—"To defend our rights," answered the Superioress, "and to maintain our constitutions in so much as we are able, we enter our protest against all that may be attempted to their prejudice." The Vicar-General ceased to insist, and withdrew.

Before long they learned the arrival of Madame Lenet, and of her approaching installation. Mother de Belly hastened to send for a notary, for an ecclesiastic as witness, and for the Prior of Abbéville to preside, and to say Mass. The usual prayers having been

said. Mother de Belly publicly laid down her charge, and the sisters gave their suffrages to Mother of the Cross, de la Vespiniere, a professed of the Convent of Paris, then at Lyons ; she had been previously notified to come without loss of time.

The last formalities had scarcely been completed, when a great noise was heard at the door of the convent. Two carriages had arrived ; one brought the Prior of St. Germain, Vicar-General, his secretary, Dom Arsene, his bailiff and an official of the Archbishop ; the other, which belonged to the Princess de Condé, contained Madame de Tourville, Madame Lenet and her brother. The annals of the Order have preserved the details of the lamentable scenes then witnessed, and in our turn, we shall conceal nothing of the long martyrdom, the recital of which makes us assist two centuries in advance at the horrors of modern evictions.

The religious understood the assault they were about to undergo. The Prior summoned them to the parlor. When the act of election had been drawn up and signed, after recommending themselves to the Lord, they went, pale and affrighted, as to their execution. "By order of the Most Reverend Archbishop," said the Prior, "in quality of his Vicar-General, I am here to install, as Superioress of this house, Madame Christine Lenet, professed religious of the Convent of Chatillon-sur-Saone, in the diocese of Langres." The official read the order of obedience from the Archbishop. It was listened to in perfect silence. Mother de Belly then spoke in the name of the Community :

"We entertain for the Archbishop the greatest respect, but, without derogating therefrom, we are obliged, in defense of our rights, and in obedience to our consti-

tutions, to declare that we can not receive, still less recognize, Madame Lenet as our Superioress. Not only she does not wear our habit, and does not belong to our Institute, but we have just held our election ; the Reverend Mother of the Cross, ancient professed of this house, has been chosen Superioress."

This protest astonished the Prior ; all the religious, on being interrogated, confirmed the declaration. The official was so carried away by his anger, that he called them impudent rebels, and the Prior ordered the door of the convent to be opened. Mother de Belly refused, and declared that the community appealed from the Archbishop to the Primate of Lyons. The Prior threatened them with interdict and excommunication ; the threat was of no avail. He repeated his order ; no attention was paid to it. Addressing himself to the portress, he commanded her to open. She answered that she had not the keys. Then there was an outbreak of threats and insults in the little Sanhedrim that assailed the grate. The religious, having done their duty, went to pray before the Blessed Sacrament.

Alarmed by the noise in the parlor, Mother de Matel had approached. When she heard the threats that intimated the deprivation of the Sacraments, she broke out in sobs and supplications, preferring every calamity to the loss of communion. Being assured by Mother de Belly that it was an idle menace, broken down and overwhelmed, she withdrew to her cell, where she cast herself in supplication at the feet of the Crucifix. The religious in the choir, hearing the noise of the workmen who had been called in to break down the doors with hammers, came to take refuge beside her, and to seek a last consolation by sharing their sorrows.

The doors of the church and of the convent did not hold out long. A rush was made ; the two ecclesiastics

who had assisted at the election, barely made their escape, but the notary, who at the summons of Mother de Belly, had drawn up a report of this violence, was still in the choir. Madame Lenet is introduced, followed by a tumultuous crowd. Finding that the sisters were absent, the Prior ascended to the room of Mother de Matel : the official, meeting Mother de Belly at the door, rudely pushed her, saying : "Make your adieus, you are to be sent where you deserve ; hurry." Calm, answering never a word, Mother de Belly cast herself at the feet of Jeanne, asked her blessing, embraced her tenderly, and bade her farewell. She was never to see her again. "Alas," she afterwards wrote, "if I had thought that we were to be separated forever, who could have torn me from her side? I would have defied the whole world to do it ; they would have been obliged, either to leave me there, to drag me away with her, or to kill me in her arms." Jeanne, too, was broken hearted: "Reverend Sir," she said, with supplicating tears, "you cut off my right arm when you drag away my daughter ; would you have me die of grief?" All was useless. Mother de Belly was forced away to the choir where the other religious were made to rejoin her.

When the Prior had succeeded in gaining silence, he caused the religious to take their seats, and assuming that of the Superioress, seated Madame Lenet at his right. After reading again the letters of obedience from the Archbishop, he addressed himself to Mother de Belly, who, in quality of former Superioress, as well as by her zeal, and the affection of the sisters, was made the mouth piece of the Community, and commanded her to salute Madame Lenet. "As my sister in Jesus Christ, yes ; as my Superioress, I can not, having already a Superioress legitimately elected." The

others joined in the refusal. The noise recommenced. M. Lenet, approaching Mother de Belly, entreated her to give the example of submission, assuring her that she would gain by it. The exasperated Prior exclaimed that the rebels should be driven out. "But first," speaking to Mother de Belly, "give up your accounts."—"I will do so, Father, when my Superioress arrives." "Go, and pack your things, and prepare to leave."—"I need only my crucifix, that will suffice."

M. Lenet once more tried persuasion, representing the state to which she would reduce herself. "Sir," she answered, "I submit myself to the will of God. My desire is to remain here, but, if necessary, let them exile me. Jesus Christ teaches us that we cannot serve two masters." The Prior also resumed his pleading and gentleness: "Reverend Father," answered Mother de Belly, "I am ready to obey you in all that I can. But here there is question of the rights of the Community and of the whole Order; we must defend them: in my place you would do the same." The official, who throughout had given evidence of an intemperate and choleric zeal, interrupted their conversation and ordered Mother de Belly to be driven out of the convent. Restraining her grief, she bade farewell to the sisters, but, when she was outside, her sobs and cries broke forth. She clung to the gate of the convent, kissing it again and again, and wetting it with her tears. She had to be dragged away by force, and flung into the carriage that conveyed her to the hospital where Mother St. Ursula awaited her. The choice of her place of exile was an attention of the Archbishop, who blamed the intrusion of Madame Lenet, which he had conceded to the insistance of the Prince de Condé; and he did not dissemble his sympathy for the Sisters of the Incarnate Word.

With the expulsion of Mother de Belly ended the most exciting part of the struggle. The Prior and the official had accompanied her, and given orders that she was to have intercourse with no one. The other religious, left to themselves, retired in consternation to their cells, and Madame Lenet, renouncing all expectation of a submission that was refused her, was satisfied to remain a mistress among ruins.

On the next day began the migration of the suppressed religious to the house of the Incarnate Word. On that and the following days there was a constant succession of new colonies, conducted by the officials, knocking for admission.

"The grief was equal amongst the strangers and the religious of the Incarnate Word. The former, driven from their homes, obliged to accommodate themselves to new usages, and subjected to the humors of a woman who received them unwillingly, bitterly deplored their unhappiness. The latter, who beheld their Community converted into a numerous assemblage of different institutes, with a stranger domineering over them, were inconsolable." * As the Archbishop, perhaps to embarass Madame Lenet by raising up difficulties for her, had assigned no fixed revenue for this crowd, the resources in the beginning often fell short. The intruded Superioress, attentive to her own case, did not hesitate to take what belonged to the Sisters of the Incarnate Word in order to relieve the wants of the unfortunate new comers.

The situation of Mother de Matel was soon, though vaguely, known in Paris. Her friends were greatly concerned, but they could not know the whole truth. When Mother de Matel was called to the parlor, Madame Lenet's invariable answer was that she was

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

unwell. As for Mother de Belly, there was a formal prohibition against all intercourse with her. Many ladies of the first families, understanding the situation, made open complaint to the Archbishop; permission had to be granted to visit her. Through her they were made acquainted with what had transpired previous to her expulsion, the secret correspondence she had contrived to open up with Jeanne, and the unhappy situation of the foundress and of her daughters. It was agreed that steps should be at once taken.

Copies were sent to the other houses of the appeal to Lyons, of the sworn report of the election of Mother of the Cross, and of the intrusion of Madame Lenet. They sent, as they were invited to do, their power of attorney to an appointed agent, who should act in the name of the whole Congregation. When the Prior received a copy of this act served on Madame Lenet, he hastened to the convent with the official to have it revoked. The sisters were in the refectory. The official, with his accustomed impetuosity, had Sister of the Blessed Sacrament Alouis summoned, who, since the departure of Mother de Belly, had become the right arm of the foundress, and the soul of the opposition. "Do you recognize this paper, and did you sign it?"—"Yes, sir."—Then, seizing her by the arm, he said: "If you do not recall it at once, I will have you conveyed to the prisons of the Archbishopric." Alarmed, but protesting that she would take nothing back, she ran to the cell of Mother de Matel. The official followed her; but the aspect of that venerable woman, and her gentle remonstrances, seemed for the moment to calm his anger. He contented himself with threats, promising to return in eight days, and to act with the last rigor if the act of revocation were not signed.

Sister Gravier, agitated by the scene, wrote to Mother de Belly all that had occurred, begging her

to submit, at least outwardly, and not to prolong a useless resistance. Such, certainly, were not the sentiments of Mother de Matel, nor yet those of Mother de Belly, who found in the letters of the foundress a firm support to her courage: "God is the master of all," she answered. "We defend justice; what have we to fear? Duty must be done, and the rest be trusted to Providence."

Perhaps the violence that we have just detailed was less trying to the Sisters of the Incarnate Word, and to Mother de Matel, than their daily vexations. They were subjected to ever increasing exactions; they were assailed by threats; they were to be imprisoned, to be deprived of their veil, to be cast in the street. Mme. Lenet looked upon them as disobedient religious, and treated them accordingly.

Mother de Matel, so venerable, so advanced in years, was not more respected than the rest. Her friends resolved to deliver her from this situation without consulting her. The Archbishop of Lyons, then in Paris, approved and favored the project. He sent his secretary to ask her to visit his hotel for a short interview. They dared not refuse him, and Jeanne, suspecting nothing—for, had she been warned, she would never have consented to separate from her daughters—entered the carriage of the Archbishop, attended by her faithful companion, Sister Gravier, and was first driven to the hotel d'Harcourt. Mme. de Villeroy met her there, revealed the stratagem resorted to for her deliverance, and presented her to the Archbishop. The prelate held a long conversation with her, declared his sorrow at beholding her the mark of persecution, and promised to endeavor to bring it to an end. She would gladly have been detained in the hotel de Villeroy, but life in a house occupied by the Archbishop and his suite was not one

to suit her love of solitude and humility. Besides, it was necessary for a time to conceal her from the pursuit of the Prior and the friends of Madame Lenet, already anxious, no doubt, on account of her absence and the noise that would be made when it should become known how a person held in so great veneration had been persecuted. The agent of the Community had foreseen the case, and had chosen an apartment in a quiet quarter.

CHAPTER V.

LAST DAYS OF MOTHER DE MATEL.—HER DEATH.

The departure of Mother de Matel was a great disappointment to her persecutors. The Prior and the official, being informed of the fact, went to the convent, and, breaking open the door of her room, took possession of all that they found there. By their orders a search was immediately instituted to ascertain the place of her concealment, and, when it failed, their anger was visited on Mother de Belly; they resolved to remove her to a greater distance, and to treat her with greater rigor. She was transferred to another convent outside the Faubourg St. Germain, the name of which she was not allowed to know. The Prior himself chose for her the remotest and most inconvenient cell, and forbade her to speak with any one without a permission to that effect signed by himself. Good Mother St. Ursula had the carriage followed, and thus ascertained the place of her exile, which she made known to the Sisters of the Incarnate Word; and thus Mother de Matel learned this new increase of persecution.

The apartment selected for her own retreat was in the house of a secular, in the fourth story, inconveniently placed just beneath the roof, where she had much to suffer. The heat was excessive; being unprovided with linen, she could not remove the perspiration with which she was covered, and, as it dried upon her, her rheumatic pains, already severe, were greatly increased. Her friends relied on the agent of the Congregation, and he, counting on a speedy solution of

the difficulty which would permit Jeanne's return to the convent, had not paid due attention to this temporary refuge. Our Lord permitted the misunderstanding so as to increase the martyrdom and the merit of His servant.

But her most intolerable suffering was in her inability to be present at Mass, and to receive the Holy Communion, which for so many years had been the daily nourishment of her soul. Her room was too far distant from the church, and her limbs, now much enfeebled, were not able to sustain her. In the beginning Sister Gravier had provided her a sedan chair, but, as their money soon gave out, she was obliged to renounce the happiness of being present at the holy mysteries. Her health, already shattered, became worse and worse, and a mortal languor supervened. Unable to take any nourishment, Jeanne often succumbed to weakness, and could scarcely utter a word. Sister Gravier, fearing that her end was nigh, resolved to have her brought back to the convent. There she could at least have the companionship of her affectionate daughters, who would be inconsolable if they could not receive her last breath ; there, too, she would regain those spiritual helps, the loss of which was now her greatest privation.

Informed of this desire, Madame Lenet, to whom the absence of the foundress was the ever impending cause of new trouble and blame, at once sent her brother to express her readiness to receive her. Mother de Matel, almost dying, was placed in a sedan chair. It was necessary from time to time to stop on the road, so great was her weakness, and her inability to support the least fatigue. At last, and with great difficulty, she reached the convent. All her daughters came to meet her, tears in their eyes, of joy at her return, and of sorrow for the wretched state in

which they found her. Madame Lenet was not the last to approach her. Mother de Matel collected all her remaining strength to testify her gratitude for this demonstration of sympathy. As she passed the door of the choir, she wished to stop and bend her knee in adoration of Him whom she had so longed to regain. In this short interview with her Lord, they beheld her countenance inflamed, and her strength visibly return. She was then conducted to her room and laid in her bed.

From this moment until the next morning she remained with her eyes closed, speaking to no one, and the first word she uttered was a request to receive Holy Communion. It was brought to her about 7 o'clock as Viaticum, in the belief that her end was nigh. As soon as she beheld her Consoler, she adored him with every mark of love. Then, addressing Madame Lenet, she said: "God, who will be my Judge, and who is here present, is witness to that pure zeal for truth which bids me speak. You have come, Madame, to disturb our Order by your entrance into our house. If, after my death, it is ruined and destroyed, I will call you to an account on the day of judgment. Beware; I lay its loss upon your conscience. You may deceive me, God you cannot deceive. He it is whom you assail, and to Him will you have to account. He will find you wherever you may be. Remember that you have a great account to render Him." *

These terrible words were pronounced with all the majesty of holiness. Madame Lenet seemed moved, and promised, with tears, "that in the future she would make good use of the honor of being in so holy a house, and that she would render it all the service in

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

her power ; it should not be her fault if it were closed.'' Jeanne then asked her, in the name of God, no more to ill use her daughters, not to keep away postulants, and to restore to her ''Mother de Belly, her daughter.'' She promised everything, and did nothing.

''After Mother de Matel had thus satisfied her zeal for the house of God, she most humbly begged pardon for the bad example she might have given. She recited with great fervor the Lord's prayer, the Angelical Salutation, the *Credo* and the *Confiteor*, and when the priest advanced, holding the sacred Host in his hands, she had them take her from the bed, and, kneeling on the floor, she exclaimed : 'Come, O God of love ; come and restore peace to my soul, which can not exist without Thee. Oh, how hard it is to live away from Thee ! Come, appease my hunger and console my unhappiness.' After uttering these tender words, she received Holy Communion, and remained for a long time in deep recollection. They then saw that the bread of angels was her sole remedy, for, from that time she was better.'' *

On that same day she asked for the habit of the Order, but, far from acceding to her request, the Prior purposely refrained from visiting the convent. The confessor, on his part, influenced by Madame Lenet, and regardless of the privileges accorded to Jeanne, and her habitual custom, refused to renew the communion, her only strength, before the eighth day.

Her weakness increasing, her daughters saw her danger, and entreated Madame Lenet to call a physician, naming M. de la Chambre. He knew Jeanne, and he was intimate with the Chancellor ; that was sufficient. They then mentioned another, M. Mirabeau, the

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

physician of His Highness the King's brother; he would attend gratuitously. That consideration was calculated to persuade her, but she did not yield, saying that the disease was not serious, and that she would make her own selection at the proper time. "And, in fact," says one of Jeanne's biographers, "a few days afterwards she introduced a young man, not very well known to the faculty, and who had to gain experience at the expense of his patients." He began by ordering medicines that were harmless enough, affirming, even to the last moment, that everything was going on well; but, when the evil became desperate, he overwhelmed the poor patient with violent remedies, of which the sole effect was to exercise her patience and exhibit her submission. A pious lady, the friend of the house, being informed of the situation, sent her own physician; he was refused entrance. In fine, a doctor of Lyons, who had come to Paris on business, and was intimately acquainted with Mother de Matel, having learned her danger, entreated admission, if only on the score of friendship. Madame Lenet would make no concession.

This wicked woman had even the cruelty to refuse nearly everything that was asked for the venerable patient. She insisted on her being left to herself, a prey to violent fever, and would allow the house to be put to no expense for remedies, with the exception of twenty cents in ten days for the making of a few bowls of broth. But this did not prevent her from affecting a great appearance of interest in her visits, and from complacently boasting her good offices.

Jeanne bore all without complaint, but she never ceased to beg for communion, and for the habit of the Order. It was still deferred. At last, on the 4th of September, she was permitted once more to be united to her Savior. In the afternoon of the same day, the Prior visited the convent. He was in the parlor when

one of the friends of the foundress, Madame Rousseau, came to ask permission to enter the cloister to visit her. He would willingly have refused, but Madame Rousseau was an influential person, and he dared not. "Well, dear Mother," said the visitor, "how are we?"—"Very ill," was the answer, "and they will not believe it."—"But, dear Mother, do you wish to die without receiving the habit of the Order of the Incarnate Word, which you have conferred on your daughters?"—"Ah, Madame," said Jeanne, with a sorrowful glance, "I have so often besought it of the Prior, and have not obtained it! No doubt he deems me unworthy. I submit myself to the will of God; He knows what a sacrifice I made in not taking it when I invested the first daughters of the Order. I have never ceased to sigh for this happiness, but, His will be done. Pray that He may have mercy on me." Madame Rousseau, greatly moved, returned to the Prior, and, with great earnestness, represented to him how extraordinary it was to refuse to the foundress of an Order what in such an extremity was granted to the youngest postulant. The Prior was vanquished, and decided to proceed to the investiture; the confessor could not be warned in time, but Providence provided a witness in M. Mandeau, an ecclesiastic and a relative of Mother de Belly, who happened to be there at the moment. It was a great consolation to Mother de Matel to be able to speak to him for a few short minutes of "her beloved daughter;" to confide to him her grief; to manifest her loving sentiments of patience and union with Jesus Christ. She did this with so great unction that M. Mandeau was moved to tears, and afterwards declared that he had never heard anything so touching and so elevated.

When the Prior had blessed the vestments according to the ceremonial, "Sister Alouis, who would not

suffer Mother de Matel to receive them from the hands of Madame Lenet, adroitly took possession of them, and had the glory of investing the most worthy postulant that the Order ever has had or ever shall have. The illustrious novice received them with exceeding fervor, answering everything with the greatest presence of mind; and, throughout, appeared penetrated with the sanctity of an action which brought her so much consolation. She received as her name in religion that of Sister Mary of Jesus, according to the choice which she had long ago made.'' *

All the daughters of Mother de Matel, and all the other religious, had been present at this touching ceremony. They congratulated the holy novice on her happiness, and she responded to their felicitations, allowing her joy to overflow. And yet this joy was incomplete. She longed to make her profession, as she had been expressly authorized to do, but the Prior would not hear it spoken of. In answer to repeated solicitations, he did not hesitate to make this favor conditional on her revocation of the donation made by Mother de Matel to Sister Gravier. She refused the odious demand, such was the energy of her soul to the very end, and such her contempt for duplicity and compromise in matters of conscience.

Mother de Matel had experienced the grief of long expectation, and of refusal. Our Lord willed that she should be consoled, and that once more she should owe it only to Him.

On the 10th of September, the Prior was just leaving the convent much irritated by the resistance made to his plans, when M. Colombert presented himself at the door, and, as a friend of the dying Mother, asked permission to enter the Convent of the Incarnate Word,

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

and, in case of urgency, to receive the vows of the foundress. Then occurred an astonishing thing. The Vicar General, till then inexorable, granted his request at once. The religious, with reason, considered this unhoped for concession as an admirable stroke of Providence. Our Lord had promised that Jeanne should come to Him in the glory of a professed religious; contrary to all hopes, He was about to realize His promise.

"M. Colombert was received as an emissary from Heaven, sent to crown the desires of the holiest of mothers.

"Previous to his arrival, they had administered Extreme Unction to the sick religious, who appeared to be sinking. On receiving the sacrament, she renewed the expression of her piety. Although she had confessed that very morning, she wished to renew the confession, and to beg pardon once more of her daughters for her bad example, giving to all her maternal benediction, and repeating her salutary warnings to Madame Lenet." *

The Sisters of the Incarnate Word, feeling that they were about to become orphans, being no longer under any illusion on that point, gave free vent to their tears.

The arrival of M. Colombert was a ray of joy in the gloom of their sorrow; Mother de Matel, especially, seemed to be buoyed up in her consolation. The danger was pressing; they made haste to proceed with the ceremonial of the vows. Madame Lenet could not respect the sanctity even of that solemn hour. Sister Alouis, as at the investiture of the habit, had taken possession of the veil, and had aided the celebrant to

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

place it on the head of the venerable professed. Madame Lenet, considering this an infraction of her rights, would, had she not been prevented, have snatched it off, in order to replace it with her own hands. Notwithstanding her weakness, Mother de Matel wished to testify her joy by intoning the *Te Deum*. From this moment her submission to the orders of the physician and the infirmarians was still more perfect; she received with a humility that could not be surpassed the attentions that were paid to her, in her respect for the vows of poverty and obedience which she had just pronounced.

It was now 7 o'clock; the grace of her consecration seemed to have brought some relaxation to her sufferings. Her grand-niece, Sister de Bécy, who was still a novice, said, laughingly: "Now you are happier than I am; now that you have made your holy profession, I hope that you will work for mine."—"I should be happy to do so, did God permit it," was the answer. "Let us pray that His holy will be done." Madame Lenet seemed unable to forego troubling the peace and recollection of her last moments. One can scarcely believe that she renewed her importunities to have the grant to Sister Gravier revoked, and, beside the dying bed of Mother de Matel, threatened the poor sister to make her pay dearly for an act extorted, as she pretended, against all justice. She then left the apartment with these words, accompanied by angry gestures directed towards the astonished assemblage.

The doctor arrived about 8 o'clock; they gave him an account of the symptoms that had caused their anxieties in the afternoon, and of the effect of his prescriptions. He still assured them that the sickness was but trifling, and ordered a new remedy which should be infallible. Mother de Matel had scarcely taken it when all her sufferings were redoubled. Her

daughters had resolved to pass the night with her, but towards 10 o'clock there seemed to be a slight amendment, and, at the instance of the confessor, who promised to summon them if the danger increased, they retired. He alone remained with Sister Gravier and Sister de Bécy.

For some hours Mother de Matel had been more quiet. All at once, raising her voice, she said, in a firm tone: "No, no, I will not."—These words she repeated three times, and with the same earnestness. Sister de Bécy, thinking that she was dreaming, or delirious, silently approached the bed, and, in a low tone, so as not to interrupt her sleep, if she were sleeping, whispered: "Mother, what is it that you will not?" "Sin," answered Jeanne, "it is sin that I will not, my daughter." The demon, then, even in that last hour, attempted a supreme assault against that soul that had so frequently vanquished him, and that was to free so many others from his sway.

A minute later, Sister Gravier approached to offer her a drink. "Oh," said the holy Mother, "silence! Jesus, Mary and Joseph are here. . . . Do you not see them? . . . Let us go; they invite me to enjoy with them eternal repose." . . .

These were her last words. They hastened to summon her daughters. When they were assembled together, the confessor began the prayers of the agonizing. It was then 1 o'clock of the 11th of September. A heavenly joy shone on the countenance of the dying saint. She raised her hands as though in answer to some loving invitation, and emitted a sigh. It was the sigh of her enfranchisement here below; it was the first sigh of her love at the gate of heaven. She was in her 74th year of her age, when she gave back her soul to God.

A few days before, near the altar railing, a great light had been seen, which, coming from four different quarters, and forming a sphere, had stopped in the middle of the choir before the *prie Dieu* of the Superioress; it had then proceeded towards the chamber of the invalid, disappearing near her bed. Two religious, who had followed it, saw it, as well as Mother de Matel, and bore witness to the fact.

The religious of the Convent of Avignon were warned in the night by the bell, which tolled of its own accord, for the passing away of their foundress; the same thing occurred in the Convents of Lyons and Grenoble. Several persons, and in particular some of her confessors, declared that, at the moment when she expired, they had seen her in the habit of the professed, and radiant with glory. The very night of her death she appeared in a dream to Mother Mary Margaret de Villard. As the first who had received the habit of the Order, she recommended her to show herself its Mother, and she gave her the book of the Constitutions. Doubtless Mother Mary Margaret would have attached no importance to this, had she not, on awaking, found the book in her hands.

The death of Mother de Matel was the cause of great grief to her daughters, who, in the circumstances in which they were placed, felt themselves doubly orphaned. Their sorrow found a sympathetic echo in the hearts of their friends. Madame Lenet refused to grant permission for an artist to draw the portrait of the foundress; she suppressed the letters of announcement which the Sisters of the Incarnate Word addressed to the persons of their acquaintance. But she could not prevent the crowd that pressed around her remains, and that filled the church. The voice of the people

was raised aloud to proclaim the merits of the illustrious deceased, and the graces obtained through her intercession.

Many hesitated not to denounce Madame Lenet, who, pursuing her victim even after death, could scarcely be persuaded to allow the church to be draped in black, and to permit a pall over the coffin, emblazoned with the armorial bearings of the Order.

After the funeral ceremonies, the religious opposed the interment until the body should be opened, and the heart removed, to be sent to the Convent of Lyons. Madame Lenet resisted this for two days ; the resistance only served to augment the public veneration for the *Holy Mother*, as she was already called. Indeed, her countenance during all this time, retained a rosy coloring, and her body exhaled a sweet odor. An immense crowd attested the fact, for they witnessed it.

Finally, on the third day, "M. and Madame de Rossignol, accompanied by a number of persons of the first distinction, who had only learned the decease through public rumor, visited the convent, and demanded permission to enter and see more closely the remains of their beloved friend, whose death had much surprised them."* Their request could not be denied. Madame de Rossignol warmly supported the proposition of the religious, and had it granted.

The surgeon charged with the autopsy, on examining the heart, exclaimed: "Here is a heart that has suffered much!" He pierced it, so as to free it of blood, but the liquor that issued was as yellow as gold. Certain mysterious words which escaped him in the operation, and Mme. Lenet's opposition, gave rise to a suspicion that Mother de Matel's death was

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

hastened by a crime. The Order of the Incarnate Word has never consented to echo this supposition.

After another funeral service, the precious remains were interred at the foot of the altar in the presence of an immense crowd of people. Some time after, an inscription was placed upon the tomb by which it might be recognized. The Abbé Colombert conveyed the heart, inclosed in a leaden urn, to the Convent of Lyons, where it was received and preserved with great veneration.

The sorrowful drama of her last days came to its close, but death descending on this Calvary could not prevent the radiance of her glory. Let us pause in pious recollection and affectionate veneration in presence of this victim. The time has come for us to contemplate the brightness of her virtues and character, and her greatness of soul. So, in the twilight of the evening of His sepulture, the friends of the Master rehearsed His goodness, His miracles, His promises, whilst calmly awaiting His resurrection.

BOOK SEVENTH.

THE PORTRAIT, THE SPIRIT AND THE VIRTUES OF MOTHER DE MATEL.

CHAPTER I.

THE PORTRAIT AND CHARACTER OF MOTHER DE MATEL.

The long route which we have pursued in the company of Mother de Matel has made us intimate with the secrets of her soul. We have heard her speak, we have seen her in action, her prayers, her joys, her trials, her labors have, like so many lines, sketched her portrait, and revealed to us her heart. What we have experienced from a voice now hushed, at the faint recital of her life, to us only a far off murmur, others who had known her more near, and had been enkindled by her glances, felt more sensibly. They shall associate us with themselves in their admiration, and shall give us their testimony.

The portrait, which we are about to extract from one of her biographers, corresponds so closely with the facts that we can not pass it by.

"All those who have read her life have recognized a soul prepared by the grace of God from her earliest infancy, attentive to every duty, having no taste but for prayer, no attraction save for crosses and humiliations; courageous in following in all things the will of God, indefatigable in labors, dauntless in difficulty,

firm in reverses, indifferent to success, forgetting equally the injuries that she received and the gratitude she deserved; always enriched by supernatural knowledge, always docile and submissive to the judgment of others. They must have admired her character, so straightforward and sincere; sensible to the miseries of others, ardent to do good, insinuating without subtleness, accommodating without weakness, polite without affectation, simple in conversation, easy in manner, solid in sentiment. They have been led to praise her conduct, so uniform and consistent; as fervent in the midst of the most severe trials as in the sweetest consolations; as exact in the least practices of piety, when embarrassed by the distractions of business, as in the solitude of perfect repose; as reserved when God alone saw her as when the public had its eyes fixed upon her; neither flattered by the confidence of the great, nor rejecting the friendship of the lowly, and finally, of which the example is so rare, as good a friend after the blackest ingratitude as though she had received proofs of the most ardent zeal." *

Tacitus could not have spoken better. This living portrait, in which the aureole of sanctity harmonizes with the golden crown of intelligence and the flame of a great heart, is full of truth. It is Mother de Matel to the life.

Another biographer says of her: "She was of moderate stature; she had a grand and noble appearance, a countenance regular in its outline and features, a body well proportioned; and all these qualities were set off by an humble modesty, great sweetness and simplicity. She was always ready to oblige others, and thus conciliated the good will of those who knew her.

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

"As to the qualities of the soul, she possessed them in the highest degree. She was affable to all, contemning no one, and esteeming herself worthy of the contempt of all. She had a singular love for those who were sincere, and she herself was so perfectly open that, even when treating with those whom she knew were trying to entrap her, she would conceal nothing. . . . Her humility was proof against honors and applause; she attributed to compliment the praise which justice accorded to her merit; always regardless of the good which was said of her, she thought only of that which she ought to do."

We have frequently had to quote the opinions of Father Gibalin. The following attestation, written on the 20th of February, 1634, finds here its place. Let us not forget that it comes from one who was regarded, in his time, and by his whole society, as a most skillful director, a theologian of sure judgment, and of consummate prudence.

"Having been requested to give my appreciation of the life and conduct of the pious and noble lady, Jeanne de Matel, institutrix and foundress of the Congregation established in Lyons by the name of the Incarnate Word, I fear to say too little if I respect the public belief, and that I may seem to say too much in my regard for the exact truth.

"I have sought information from four Fathers of our Society, and from several others of different Orders, all men of great virtue and of singular capacity, who have been the confessors and directors of this noble woman, and, moreover, I have seen the opinion which many others have had of her piety, committed to paper and signed with their blood. Yet, I will say nothing on the testimony of such irreproachable witnesses, but only what I myself have learned in these

last years, and it is the more worthy of belief because in the five preceding years I had shown myself slow to credit what I had heard of the life of this good woman. . . . . .

"Her perfect knowledge of spiritual and divine things, her marvelous facility in explaining the mysteries of faith, and her special understanding of the Scriptures, prove that she has been taught in a private but sublime school. For several months I have examined, with theological strictness, the great and divine things which she has written about God, by command of her confessors and superiors, and I have found nothing that was not conformable to the faith, and to the teachings of the Holy Fathers, or that did not breathe piety.

"To this gift of wisdom and intelligence, God has added that of the word. She imparts devotion to the soul of her hearers, with such strength and sweetness as to make wonderful concessions, and to fill them with divine love, in her familiar conversations. This beautiful talent is embellished by others that more especially concern sanctity; as the gift of prayer, from which she derives such brilliant lights; that of tears, that flow continually from her eyes; a heart almost constantly inflamed; an ardent love of Jesus Christ, Whom she receives in daily Communion by a special privilege from the Sovereign Pontiff; an inflexible courage in adversity, intrepidity in difficulties, constancy in difficult enterprises that regard the service of God, an extraordinary care and zeal for the salvation of souls, a low and poor opinion of herself, and, finally, great innocence, accompanied by a sincere and simple candor in manifesting her conscience, which has been admired by all those to whom she has laid it open, so that it seems impossible that the Angel of

Darkness should be concealed in the midst of such light. . . . .

"I attest, before God, that all this is true.

"In faith of which I have signed these, and have had affixed the seal of our Society.

"JOSEPH GIBALIN, of the Society of Jesus."

No one can deny that M. Bernardon, Prior of Denicé, was one of those who had the opportunity of forming a true judgment of Mother de Matel. As we have seen, he was the frequent and devoted companion of her journyes, the witness of her joys, her trials and her foundations. This is his statement, a few years after her death. "I, the undersigned, having frequented, for more than thirty years, the society of the late noble and pious lady, Jeanne Chézard de Matel, institutrix and foundress of the order of the Incarnate Word, and of the Blessed Sacrament, and having had the honor to accompany her in several journeys, amongst others in those which she made to Paris, Grenoble and Avignon, to found there convents of her Order, and having often had the care of her conscience, I attest and certify to my having always recognized in this illustrious person a fine mind, a solid judgment, a most happy memory, a noble and generous heart, conformably to her birth, extraordinary virtue and piety, angelic innocence, a perfect knowledge of spiritual and divine things, a wonderful facility in explaining the mysteries of the faith, and a special understanding of the Sacred Scriptures, as is proved by the beautiful and learned writings which she has left us. In faith of which I have signed this attestation, Lyons, June 4, 1668. BERNARDON, Prior of Denicé."

Nevertheless, as the Incarnate Word on the one hand charmed the multitude by the visibly divine character of His mission, and on the other beheld

doubt and faintheartedness trying to weaken and gainsay it, so God sometimes permitted a cloud in the mind of certain souls concerning the eminent gifts of His servant, that He might be obliged to intervene directly in her justification. We give here a beautiful illustration of this remark :

"In 1653," as Mother de Belly tells us, "the Abbé de Saint-Just had one day a doubt whether Mother de Matel was led by a good spirit. He made known his thoughts to Reverend Mother Mathieu, Superioress of the Religious of St. Elizabeth, at Paris. This Mother was of eminent virtue and specially favored by God ; she was looked upon as a saint. M. de Saint-Just, her director, had entire confidence in her. He ordered her, then, in virtue of holy obedience, to pray God to make known the spirit in which Mother de Matel acted, whether she was led by the Holy Spirit, or deceived by that of darkness. The good religious obeyed her director in all simplicity and readiness, and asked Our Lord what He would have her to say to M. de Saint-Just to dissipate his doubts in reference to Mother de Matel.

"Our good Lord, wishing to make known to Reverend Mother Mathieu how pleasing her obedience was to Him, answered her : 'Learn, my daughter, that there is no one in this world who is more pleasing to Me than Mother de Matel ; that she is a child of benediction, who pleases Me by her purity, and by the low opinion she has of herself ; she does not attribute any good to herself, and gives to Me the glory of the graces which I communicate to her in consequence of My love ; her faithfulness in corresponding to them makes Me in return more liberal. I have sent heavenly spirits to attend and instruct her in My truth and will. No one can take part against this beloved daughter of

My heart without being against Me; assure your director of this.'

"This true daughter of obedience reported these words to M. de Saint-Just, who again ordered her to ask of God a sign that these words truly came from Him.

"Mother Mathieu obeyed as promptly as she had done before, and Our Lord answered her: 'Thou shalt have no other sign than this: I will prevent thy director from offering up the Sacrifice of Mass, and will keep him thus, without his being confined to his bed, until he unhesitatingly believes what thou hast told him from Me.

"At that very moment the Abbé de Saint-Just found himself, though without pain, paralyzed in such a sort that he could not celebrate Mass, nor even enter the chapel, which was on a level with his room. He remained four or five days in this condition. His penitent, having learned what had happened, wrote to him begging that he would cause himself to be conveyed to the convent.

"M. de Saint-Just accepted the invitation, and had himself borne in a sedan chair to the Convent of the Religious of St. Elizabeth. Mother Mathieu told him what Our Lord had said, and made him see that his partial paralysis was the sign that he had asked for. M. de Saint-Just was much surprised, and admired the goodness of God in his regard. He renounced all doubt of the virtues of Mother de Matel, and acknowledged that she was led by the good Spirit. His strength at once returned to him, and the next morning he offered up Mass as usual; the consolation then granted to him was so great that he could scarcely finish the Holy Sacrifice.

"M. de Saint-Just communicated these facts to the Reverend Fathers Gibalin, Dulieu, de Barri, and

to several other Fathers of the Society of Jesus, as well as to M. Deville, the official of the Archbishop of Lyons."

The history of Mother de Matel has shown us that she had intercourse with the Court, with many great personages of the world, and with illustrious prelates. The Bishop of Condom had the greatest veneration for her sanctity, and was so assured of the efficacy of her intercession with God, that when he was at Paris he went frequently to see her, and wrote to her almost every day, that he might be regularly informed of the favors she received from heaven. Amongst the prelates who took great interest in the Order of the Incarnate Word, we may also mention, with the Bishop of Nimes, those of Lodéve, Amiens, Dole, Chartres, Grenoble, the Archbishop of Toulouse, and others. It cannot be questioned that, in her quality of foundress, and through her piety, Jeanne exercised great influence on many celebrated persons in the Church of her time. Her habitual discretion in her writings, and the loss of nearly her entire correspondence, through an ignorance greatly to be regretted, leave us but few authentic proofs of its extent. But they suffice to show that she was associated in the apostolic preoccupations of St. Vincent de Paul, M. Olier, of many holy priests, fervent Christians and illustrious religious, and was a confidant of their zeal. "If M. Vincent unites himself with the Fathers of the Mission of Provence," she writes to M. de Cerisy, * their first institutor, "and they are my intimate friends. M. Olier was the first to conceive the thought; he is a saint, and a great friend of mine. In passing through Valence, on my return from Avignon, he told me that M. Vincent had sent for him to Paris to effect the union, and that he wished to have my opinion on the

* Grenoble, June 17th, 1643.

subject. I told him to do it, that it would be to the greater glory of God, and more to the benefit of souls than any one could conceive ; that, after having long meditated on it, and offered it up to Our Lord, I felt myself proved, nay, urged to counsel it. If M. Vincent can unite with these gentlemen, the Holy Ghost will impart rich graces to the union ; He will bless them and multiply them. M. Olier is a saint ; I may say it, because I am not ignorant on that point."

We have seen the share that she had, through her advice, in the formation of the Dominican Noviciate at Paris. She inspired, encouraged, and sustained Father Carré in that work, which gave to the Church, in the lifetime of the foundress, many holy missionaries, and to the Order many distinguished superiors, and one of its generals.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that the habit of divine contemplation, and her elevation of mind and thought made Mother de Matel less attentive and apt for the multiplied cares that attend the government of a house. This admirable woman, who would be seized by the raptures of ecstacy, whilst occupied with the kitchen furnace, exercised, afar off, as well as when present, a minute vigilance on the temporal affairs of her houses, and showed herself well-informed in the petty details of housekeeping. Let us take, for instance, this confidence made to M. Bernardon, at Lyons, when Jeanne was cook at Paris: "I beg you to believe that the Sisters of Paris, who are not the best managers of the day, are not a little astonished at the expenses of Sister Mary Chaud; as for myself, I used to support twenty-four persons, and keep them in good condition, with what she expends on twelve ; and kept more fires than suffice for thirty in the best houses in Paris. When I was at Lyons I kept a better table for thirty persons, and at half the expense for wood, char-

coal and fagots. I left behind me the half of the provision that had been made for two years' consumption. Sister Elizabeth managed better. Sister Mary is like one who throws away the flour to save the bran ; she would ruin herself, and yet never have a good meal. I do the cooking, being Procuratress now for two years; all our Community is not only in good health, but there is not in Paris a convent where the inmates are in better condition than in that of the Incarnate Word, and yet we do not use one sack of charcoal, nor the fourth part of the wood bought by Sister Mary. I give at every meal three dishes well prepared. . . . This I tell you for yourself, for I do not wish to put myself forward as a good cook, or as the strong woman who set herself to important things without forgetting the use of the distaff."

How charming, and yet how edifying ! It was this intelligent care of temporal affairs that enabled Jeanne, with comparatively limited resources, to provide for the foundation of her houses, and to bear alone the burthen of supporting the Convent of Paris during the civil wars. She tried to instill this same prudence in her daughters. Speaking of one of them in a letter to Sister de Belly : "I recommend her to be economical, and that her accounts should be according to the intentions of the Incarnate Word, who bade His Apostles to gather up the remnants of the bread that was miraculously multiplied. It is this that makes me consider the account that we shall have to give of all that He has committed to us, spiritual or corporal, temporal or eternal. Recollect that I paid 800 livres for the rent of M. Lalive's house, and, besides, supported my daughters, Sisters of the Passion, of the Holy Ghost, of the Cross, Gravier, Meunier, Constance and others, without other resources than those which the Incarnate Word afforded. I gave 100 crowns to the celebrant of

the Mass; I provided for the Church, and for three boarders who did not repay me. I was at the service of everyone, but my imperfections were more numerous than my offices, and vitiated them to my confusion, which is beyond all comparison, as I see myself in prayer."

The natural qualities of Jeanne we can clearly see, and it is the unanimous opinion of her biographers, were quite up to the level of the supernatural privileges imparted to her.

"I affirm," writes Father Gibalin, "that, during several years that I had the direction of her conscience, I recognized in her a quick and penetrating mind, a happy memory, a marvellous facility of expression, a good disposition, frank, ingenuous, candid, without gall or melancholy, and all the good qualities that can be required for the cultivation of virtue."

Father Bossieu, her contemporary and first biographer, says: "If, after having given what others think of Mother de Matel, I should essay, briefly, to draw her portrait, I would say that everything was grand in her, mind, heart, countenance, air and manners; that the gravity that was seen in her had nothing of rudeness or pride. . . . She may be proposed to all the world as a model of perfection in the order of nature, and of grace."

But the natural quality that most astonished Jeanne's contemporaries, and best served in her the designs of grace and her own ardor, was the winning speech mentioned by Father Gibalin. Besides all the human conditions that can increase such a gift, Jeanne saw it grow in her, by a supernatural influence, till it became truly a great power.

"Speak, my beloved," our Lord often said to her. "I will make nets of thy words, *in verbo tuo laxabo*

rete. * "I will allow myself to be captured by thy affectionate words; I wish them to be nets to catch happily many souls. It was for this that I gave thee the grace to explain thyself, to insinuate thyself into the affections of those who listen to thee, and who, in their admiration, say: 'She does not speak as other women! God speaks in her!' . . . . I have made thee a hook with which to catch hearts, as so many fishes in the sea of this world." †

It seems that certain persons thought that Jeanne spoke too willingly and too much of the things of God. Our Lord reassured her by a magnificent eulogy on the Word: "My daughter, My Father speaks eternally, and utters His Word, Myself. My divine Father created time and the centuries through Me, the Word. By the Word He created the world and all creatures. I adorn and embellish them through the Holy Ghost. He fills them by the Word. By His word He expelled Adam from Paradise; by words he has repaired the wrong and regained what Eve had lost by her word. By words He revealed His designs to Abraham, to Moses, and to all the patriarchs and prophets; by the Word, His eternal speech, He has manifested Himself, taking on human nature."

On another occasion, Our Lord, answering the same objection, said: "My daughter, little fountains are inclosed, the rivers have their beds and channels, but the ocean is broad and has no bounds. The prophet Isaiah repented of having kept silence. The excuses of Jeremiah were not available to dispense him from repeating what God had told him to announce to the people. Nearly all the prophets, for having announced My word, have suffered contempt, injuries, and some have been put to death." . . . .

* Luke, v. 5.

† Letters.

Except in the days of her youth, the virtue of the Apostle of the Incarnate Word does not appear to have been subjected to those temptations that arise from the senses, or the appeals of earth. It is in the supernatural region of the interests of Jesus Christ that the combat was waged. "Temptation and lapses, which frequently occupy so great a place in the career of great souls, are not here the principal thing. Jeanne's nature, more affectionate than impassioned, sweet rather than violent, more devoted than rebellious, did not disturb her by violent conflict. Her love was tender and habitual. Her attraction was the Word Incarnate. This includes all that can be said of her. In Him and for Him she thought and felt, lived and died. From her first to her latest sigh, there was no place but for Him." *

She loved Him so tenderly, she studied Him so closely, that her soul took on a habit of divine calm, of a tranquil sorrow. That state of contradiction, which we may say was the ground on which the Savior cast the precious pearls of His consolations and favors, gave to her countenance a something undefinably plaintive and sorrowful. "It has always seemed to me," wrote one of her directors, "that you had little call for more sorrow, but much need of joy." Her soul caught, as it were, a reflection from that of Jesus, who, in possession of the beatific vision throughout His life, was all His life crucified and in martyrdom. No smile is there; tears are her food by day and night.

Jeanne had a sweet and affectionate disposition, Jesus and Mary making for her, to use her own expression, "a path of sweetness, a way of milk and honey." † "But," and again it is she who speaks,

* Ernest Hello.

† Autobiography.

"her quickness seemed as lightning when her zeal speaks to those who oppose the glory of her beloved, the Word." *

Milk and honey, powder and flame, such was the soul, such the heart of Mother de Matel. † But she is of herself the most faithful painter, the best witness, and the study of her writings shall make her better known to us.

* Autobiography.

† There is an authentic portrait of Mother de Matel. Photographic copies of that pure, sweet and intelligent countenance can be procured from the convents of the Order.

CHAPTER II.

THE WRITINGS OF MOTHER DE MATEL.

As long as Cardinal Richelieu, Archbishop of Lyons, lived, Jeanne, obedient to the order of her pastor, continued to send him the journal of her life. When he died, Fathers de Lingende, de Crest and Condé, her directors and confessors at Paris, and Father Gibalin, all of the Society of Jesus, commanded her to continue the work. Monseignieur de Condom enjoined the same. Jeanne had to obey.

And yet it was not solely in submission to them, her directors and superiors, that Mother de Matel consigned to writing the graces and lessons received from on high. Our Lord Himself had imposed that law. "My dear daughter," He one day said to her, "the beloved Disciple has written down the visions and favors which I communicated to him, urged and inspired by the spirit of truth. That spirit wishes you to write those which My love has communicated and shall communicate to thee. Remember, daughter, that I told thee, more than twenty years ago, that thou art a pen in the hand of one rapidly writing. * It was not without a singular disposition of Providence, that, when still a child, on opening the book of the Hours, thou didst generally fall upon that text of the Psalms: * *Eructavit cor meum verbum bonum, dico ego opera mea regi, lingua mea calamus scribo velociter scribentis.*" To which Jeanne answered by this prayer of humble simplicity: "Do as Thou wilt, agreeably to Thy promise that I write always ac-

* Ps. XLIV., 2.

cording to thy spirit of truth. Dear Love, grant me the favor that in writing Thy marvels I may not embarrass the minds of those who may read with as sincere an intention as that with which I write, namely, to obey Thy will, to promote Thy glory, and the good of souls." *

The Savior, who inspired her work, did not disdain to be its apologist, and on different occasions, He said to her, "*Bene scripsisti de Me*," † words that He had also addressed to the Angel of the Schools.

On the evening of All-Saints, 1636, in an affectionate communication to her, He said "that He wished that these writings should, by a divine dispensation, be useful to souls, and for the good of His daughters."

On another day, September 7th, 1644, Mother de Matel had contemplated the happiness of Heaven, and the wonderful ingenuity of divine love in communicating itself to the elect: "My soul," said she, "suspended in admiration, and in the consideration of these graces, cried out: *Generationem ejus quis enarrabit*, ‡ Who shall recount this generation of God in the glory of His saints? My Divine Love answered me that it should be myself who should astonish the world by my discourses and writings; that I should exalt the glory of this good God, who never appeared so great as when He made use of weak and little things to further His designs."

The skilled and pious directors of Mother de Matel had asked themselves "if, whether among the things attributed to the Holy Spirit in her writings there was

* Autobiography.

† Thou hast written well of Me.

‡ Isaiah, I. III., 8.

not, perhaps, something of her own?" and "she ought to fear," they thought, "all that came from her own affection." "I, too, am as much afraid of them," writes Jeanne to one of them, "and, therefore, after your letter I shall willingly cease to wish to write as I do. But I had understood that I could do it without fear, in obedience to you all, my Fathers, and because it was the will of the Holy Ghost to make use of me to explain His graces." She adds: "Never had I the intention of being learned, and I never will, so much as to be loving, even beyond all saints, if so it could be, according to the Divine will." *

When one has perused the writings of Mother de Matel, though only in the extracts found in these volumes, one understands the justice of that word of Our Lord by which He would reassure her against her own weakness. "If the Holy Spirit did not direct thee, in what a labyrinth wouldst thou not enter, writing so frequently of divine mysteries that cannot be known by a young person who has never studied, without the unction of that Spirit who illumines thee with such light." † "I am obliged," she says, "to confess that, out of prayer, I learn nothing, but, when I have issued from it, I take my pen, and, without consulting any other book than my Bible, I write for hours together; and, notwitstanding the rapidity with which I write, my hand sometimes cannot keep up with the flow of thoughts that come to me suddenly and of themselves, like flashes of lightning." . . . .

One day Our Lord Himself explained to her the nature of these sudden and wonderful illuminations of her mind. "He told me that it is not so much the number as the richness and nobility of the light that

* Letters to Father Jacquinot.

† Autobiography.

we should esteem. One diamond may be worth all that is in the shop of a jeweler, if the rest are but jewels of mean value. But, if the diamond could multiply itself, and, by a multitude of reflections, produce new diamonds, then it would be a treasure in itself. My daughter, the lights and graces which I communicate to thee are expressed in this comparison. In fact, in one word that He made me understand, or in one truth that He would teach me, I would discover a number of others. These lights grow by a marvelous multiplication, which neither reading nor study could effect, and I have often experienced it."

"I am the light," said Our Lord to her, one Epiphany, applying a prophecy made concerning Himself, "who shine before thee, on thee, in thee, around thee, and after thee. Kings and peoples shall walk in the light of thy writings, a light that comes from Me. I receive thy presents, I give thee Myself, Who am Paradise." * Another time he says: "By that love that burns in thy bosom, and by that understanding of Scripture that I give thee in reading it, it must be seen that it is I Who conduct thee, Who open thy eyes, at the eating of the bread as for the disciples of Emmaus. To fulfill the Scripture I willed to die; if I were again mortal, I would die, if necessary, to verify the writings that the loving Spirit and obedience have made thee write." *

We can understand how the contemporaries of Mother de Matel, witnesses of her virtues, witnesses of the extraordinary graces by which the Lord seemed to countersign her words, collected this treasure with a veneration that has never failed in the succeeding centuries. When giving her portrait, and in her life, we have cited the judgment formed of her by her directors

* Autobiography.

and by persons eminent for their virtue and science. We now produce the opinion of one who was connected with the highest interests of the Court and the State : "The Chancellor of France, Peter Séguier, as intrepid a defender of the truth as ever lived, could not read the writings of Mother de Matel without tears. He loved their simplicity and enjoyed their unction, and he acknowledged that they had no slight share in detaching him from the vanities of the world, and making him love and serve God." *

The daughters of Mother de Matel had the deepest veneration for the writings of their holy foundress. In reading her life, we are moved by a detail, which here finds its place. From time to time the hand that has arranged the pages in order pauses. What is the reason? She has found a page misplaced, and appertaining to a previous date. Shall she make the sacrifice? No ; she inserts it there, and, to explain this anachronism of filial piety, she adds a note, as did Mother de Belly when she put a leaf of March, 1635, in the year 1671. "Having come across these ten preceding lines, written by the hand of our pious Mother, Jeanne Chézard de Matel, our foundress and institutrix of the Congregation of the Incarnate Word, the respect which I have for this worthy Mother, and the veneration that I have always entertained for her solid virtue, joined to the esteem that I have for her writings, one that is shared by all persons of merit, and by others, have induced me to place this fragment in the book of her writings, fearing that it might otherwise be lost among other papers. Sister Jeanne of Jesus de Belly, official secretary of our Community of Paris."

The most incontestable proof of the respect of the Religious of the Incarnate Word for the writings of

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

their Mother are the tears that we have seen shed, the sobs that were heard during the visitation of the Cardinal, which seemed to threaten their loss. Still greater is that of the pious care with which, during two centuries, they have laboriously handed down from house to houses copies of her writings, and the vigilance with which they have guarded them.

Writing through obedience, without any thought of self-love, without any literary pretensions, it is easy to conceive that Mother de Matel was absolutely indifferent to style. "She writes as one does when writing for one or two persons only. She wrote things as they appeared to her, being absolutely indifferent to the manner. Her phrasing is often obscure, intricate, heavy, sometimes unintelligible." *

And yet, beautiful language, though all unsought, often comes naturally to her. Her thought becomes animated, it colors and adorns itself as a Queen. Among all the orators of holy renown, who has ever more intimately united richness and exactitude than she has in this passage, where she describes the value of tears.

"'Dear Spouse,' said my Savior, "tears are accounted in heaven more precious than are on earth oriental pearls, and the jewels so much prized by men. They are only the adornment of the body during this mortal life, but the tears shed for My love are transformed into meritorious pearls, that embellish the soul, and adorn the body, after the general resurrection. During the life of eternity, in the Louvre of glory in heaven, tears are admired because there they can not be produced. It is a place of happiness, on entering which the blessed are crowned, after I have dried their tears at the close of their mortal life.

* Œuvres Choisies. Ernest Hello.

"The tears of the voyagers of life increase the accidental joy of the saints who comprehend them. The souls of those holy doves are pleasing to the saints who gave them the example of complaining the absence of a Majesty Whom they loved, and Who, from all eternity, loved them to their beatification. The saints, offer these tears a sacrifice to the God of goodness, as David offered up the water which his soldiers, to do him pleasure, had sought at the peril of their lives.

"I accepted that offering, but still more the tears which love produces, and renders meritorious for the life eternal. Magdalen shed tears in proportion to her love; she loved much, she wept much! The tears of Peter were as the bitterness of his contrition, and in the end his happiness was measured by the bitterness and sorrow of the way. Such tears are pleasing to My Angels, who are ministering spirits of fire and flame. They draw near to contemplate those wonderful waters flowing from loving eyes, begotten in heaven like themselves, spiritualized by My grace. . . .

"*Spiritus Dei ferebatur superaquas;* * In the beginning, the spirit of God moved over the waters. If, through an impossibility, I were not He from whom He proceeds, inseparable by nature; or, if I were not that God-man on Whom He was to rest, as on the masterpiece which He had wrought in a virginal bosom, seeing My shoulders and My bosom covered by thy tears, † He would fly in the form of a dove to the borders of those waters.

"And I, daughter, have descended into the valleys, passing over the angels, who are mountains, in order to lift to the throne of glory human nature cov-

* Gen. I, 2.

† We have seen that Our Lord had shown Himself to Mother de Matel wearing a baldric of her tears transformed into bright pearls.

ered with tears. . . . These tears I will wear, even on solemn festivals, in the presence of angels, who rejoice, in imitation of their King, on seeing the tears of a penitent who is converted and does penance." * . . .

Is it not as though we were listening to Bossuet in his grand apostrophe to Satan on a feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. . . . "Thou didst think to overthrow human nature through a woman, weak, and easily deceived, as a young girl, forgetful that she was a minor, and that God, her guardian, would guard her inheritance. O, savage beast, thy envy was not hid from this good Father; He will know how to punish thy malice that would destroy the most beautiful creature of His hands. Ah, he did not create her that thou shouldst be allowed to destroy her by snares which He too well knew. He will cover thee with the veil of ignorance, for He sees that thy envy and malice would exterminate this beautiful plant which He transplanted from the plains of Damascus to the garden of His terrestrial paradise. He will gather the seed and germ of this original justice, the germ of immortality. He will preserve it in the bosom of St. Anne, and from it shall be conceived the Holy Virgin, without stain of original sin."

If, occasionally, Mother de Matel subjects her composition to the vigorous rules of logic and order, it is not through skill, but because so it came to her.

Such, for instance, is her commentary on the wonders wrought by the three *fiats* in the Creation, the Incarnation, the Passion :

"The first was in the creation, God producing creation from the abyss of chaos, by the sole movement of His will. The second was pronounced by the Blessed

* Autobiography.

Virgin consenting to the word of the Father, when the Word was made flesh. The third was uttered by the God-man in the Garden of Olives, yielding Himself to all the rigor of the justice of His Father."

One of the greatest beauties in her writings is that which consists in the use of the Sacred Scriptures themselves. As we have already said, the Scriptures were the golden key with which her Spouse opened to her the door of His adorable mysteries; it is not singular, then, that she should use them to open to her brethren the sanctuary to which she had been admitted. Divinely instructed in her conversation with her Savior, Mother de Matel knew their different senses, and, like the Holy Fathers, adapts them easily to her thoughts, with an art the more surprising that it seems so unconscious and without effort. The Scriptures to Jeanne are like a great river that flows through the plain of her soul, from one end to another; she goes to the source and draws limpid and irrigating waters at her liking. Not a hidden corner of her domain escapes the influence, not a blade of grass remains unrefreshed. Or, if so you prefer it, her Divine Spouse has opened for her His treasure and displayed His diamonds. The expert jeweler knows their value; without hesitating she takes them by the handful, just as she needs them, and sets them every one in their place. Yet more, she adapts them so well to her work that the jewels and the stuff to be enriched appear to be one. The setting suits the diamond so well that no one would care to separate them.

One beautiful passage among a thousand will give an idea of her great art. Jeanne de Matel is making Our Lord speak in celebration of His royalty: "Judah is My royal stock. I am King in Judah, in the bosom of My Eternal Father, Who communicates to Me His essence. I confess that I am His true and well-beloved

Son in Whom He is well pleased. I am King in Judah, because I am of the line of Judah. I am the true King of Kings. I bear upon My thigh: *Rex regum et Dominus Dominantium*, * as well as on my robe. I am King by My eternal generation, King by My temporal birth. I am the conquering lion of the tribe of Judah, † the root of David, the Lord Jesus, God and man, who sleep with open eyes. Sleeping, I looked upon death to vanquish him in the tomb and in limbo."

It may, then, be truly said "that this great soul plunged herself in Scripture as a fish in the sea, and, like a fish, found life in the abyss. For her, nothing is past, nothing is dead; all is living, all actual, all contemporary. The mysteries which she relates seem to pass under her eyes, and exhale a certain spirit which she makes us breathe and feel. The words which she cites from Scripture seem to be read by her for the first time as she cites them, so fresh is their impression, which, in turn, she makes her reader feel, so contagious is that freshness. The spirit never tires. It prevents the letter from tiring. It is unexpected in its movement, and fruitful in its love.

"This great interest which attaches itself to the quick emotion of the soul, related at the very instant of their conception and caught at their birth, is never absent from the writings of Mother de Matel." ‡

This facility in appropriating the thought, and especially the text of Sacred Scripture, was such that it became as a scandal to certain over-didactic persons. "I complained to my divine Love because some said that my applications ot Scripture were not literal. To which the Savior, my good Master, answered: "The lit-

* Apoc., XIX., 16, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

† Apoc., V., 5.

‡ Œuvres Choisies, Ernest Hello.

eral sense, with the exception of what is historical, is little known by men, God having reserved that to Himself. The prophets knew very well what they said, but they did not always know what God meant in what they said. . . . . Thou hast the happiness of possessing Me, and in Me thou hast all the senses that are in Scripture, which I develop in thy intelligence as they are needed for thy advantage and for the edification of thy neighbor. Hence have I made of thee archives in which thou findest that multitude of Scriptural expressions that astonishes those who read thy writings." *

The writings of Mother de Matel are, therefore, like succulent fruits from the garden of Holy Scripture. Can we be surprised that they should savor of the soil in which they grew? Or, rather, like the Scripture itself, they are an exquisite manna of varying taste.

From time to time her writings are like the accents of a lute, and as a burning lyric. Is she meditating on the arisen Savior on an Easter morn? Her contemplation seems to commence as with the notes of a clarion of victory. "My Emperor, and my God! Arise, my glory! Arise glory of mankind! Arise, glory of the Angels! Arise, glory of the living God, Thy Father, Who rouses Thee from Thy sleep by His Holy Spirit, one God with Him and Thee, Whom with Him Thou producest within. Arise by Thy power; give life to Thy body, Thou who has given it to all that liveth! Arise, O light, by thy essence and excellence!"

Meditating on the sanctification of St. John in the mystery of the Visitation, she apostrophizes the divine Infant.

"Little Lion, borne in the bosom of Mary, ascend with her the mountains, of which Thou art King; go

* Letters.

seize Thy prey in the entrails of his mother ; prove that Thou art alert and skillful, and by a holy stratagem despoil hell of its prey ; snatch this lion from the talons of original sin. Thy mother is a lioness who will awake him by her roaring."

And what grave and severe solemnity there is in this page on the stay of Our Lord in the desert : "The Holy Ghost, who had rested on this Nazarene, on this Holy of the Lord, sends Him forth into the desert to fast for forty days and forty nights ; to be tempted by Satan, and to dwell by Himself on the miracle of the Jordan ; for forty days and forty nights He makes Him dwell with the beasts. The angels do not show themselves to us until after His fast and victory, and then only to wait on Him at table ; we hear not their angelic music; they speak not, they intone no *Gloria* as at His birth in the stable. For there are no shepherds in this desert watching their flocks, to be invited to see the Lamb who is their good Shepherd.

"The desert is the place of trial of Our Lord's fidelity to His Father ; it is the arena in which he tries weapons with the revolted spirits whom He was to vanquish after having essayed their strength, their ruses, their malice.

"The desert is rude and frightful ; divine love can alone soften it. The love which this child of prayer has for the glory of His Father, and for the redemption of men, pressed Him to do and suffer anything to satisfy hungered justice in just rigor, and to acquire by His sufferings beatitude for us, which to Him was essentially due !"

At other times, what sweetness, what unction ! This page, on the Love of God, would seem to have been written by the pen of St. Francis of Sales : "When first I thought of Thee, my dear Love, I saw

in Thee a mother whose breasts were overflowing with the abundance of her milk. It flows from her whilst her infant, distracted by some amusement, seems to contemn it; but she clasps him gently to her bosom, and by caresses invites him to draw again from that fount which her tenderness keeps open to him. If her child complies with her desire, her joy is perfect, and she gives forth streams of milk; if he holds back, or tries to escape, she hastens to make it flow upon him; that liquor which is his nourishment, and in which, so to speak, she would drown him." *

Wishing to encourage the love of contradiction and suffering, she proposes the example of the Savior, Whom she has just been contemplating "in a sublime suspension;" how full of unction and tenderness her appeal! "The bosom of the divine Father, (in the eternal generation) and that of the sweet and holy mother (in the time of the infancy) were full of delight; but the breasts of the cross were full of bitterness and affliction to the Savior. I saw how, after having been surfeited with opprobrium, He was called to the bosom of glory. . . . To imitate Him, we must, with Him, feed at the bosom of the Cross, loving, for love of Him, contradictions, sufferings, death itself, to merit being lifted up to the bosom of glory and of the divinity."

The sublime is frequent in the Holy Books; human language is less frequently rich in it; it is not a continuous gift even to the greatest minds. It is generally unexpected; it is a lightning flash in a calm sky, a clap of thunder, a boldness of expression or thought that startles. Mother de Matel is often sublime after this manner.

St. John arrives first at the empty sepulchre of Our Lord. He does not enter. Why? "St. John was a

* Autobiography.

holy eagle, and, on not finding the body, is baffled at losing his prey."

The Apostles go fishing after the Resurrection; what mystery is here? "It is this: that the Apostles were not only to catch souls, but Jesus Christ Himself. He had said to them: 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' But, O wonder! He is Himself their catch. They take a God-man, Who is well content to be captured by them. He Who swims in the ocean of the divinity darts in a miraculous manner into the net of the Apostles, and gives them the power of reproducing Him in the consecration of the bread and wine, and of retaining Him there."

Is there question of attaching pious souls to Jesus? "Since you must be travelers, do not regard too closely the earth that you press with your feet; that is, be in it only through necessity, not affection. Be sacredly attached to your divine Love. He should suffice for you, since He is sufficient to Himself."

Recalling the beautiful answer of St. Thomas Aquinas to Our Lord, Who asked him what reward he desired: "None other than Thyself." "Thou art an abyss," she exclaims, "and thou askest for another abyss, *abyssus abyssum invocat.*"

"Thou shouldst be a transparent crystal, in which I would dwell," said Our Lord, speaking of the Holy Communion. "It is a relic of My Holy Mother, My sacred Body, which I give thee every day, enshrining Myself in thee." And, drawing from this a conclusion in favor of confidence in the confessor: "Must not the Father inspect the crystal to see whether there be any spot there, that, by removing it, he may see Me lodged in thy heart?"

Speaking of the glories that Mary derived from her maternity: "I may say that Mary signs with her Son

Jesus Christ. Mary uses her Son as a seal which guarantees the excellency that is her right as Mother of the God-man." Instituting a parallel between the Annunciation and the Purification: "The Holy Ghost, wishing to make of the Incarnation a marvel, did not reveal to Mary that the Word came with a sword. In His first entry, the Word concealed the sword, now the Holy Spirit draws it forth, and pierces her soul, that soul of Mary that had thrilled in her Savior."

David sacrificed the water of the cistern, which three of his brave soldiers had sought at the peril of their lives. "It belongs to Jesus Christ alone to drink the blood of His martyr, and to give of His own to be drunk, He alone being Sovereign by essence, by excellence, and by love."

The Savior carries the burthen of all mankind, but, "He carries the elect on His bosom, as the objects of His love; He aids them by the gentle glances of His loving eyes. The wicked, though heavy, He carries on His shoulders with suffering." "Thou showest mercy somewhere," she says, "because Thou art mercy."

What a beautiful passage, that on St. Magdalen! "Magdalen so loved perfumes, that she became one." And, elsewhere addressing her: "Come, Magdalen, and open a siege against the holy city. Dig trenches in thy humility, fill them with thy tears, swim over, enter, without opposition, the city of love; thou shalt encircle it with thy tresses; one hair alone would serve to breach it. To be victorious, aim straight at the heart of Jesus. Thou wilt make spoil of His loving delight."

But the special subject of Mother de Matel's pen and word would appear to have been grace. Living

habitually so near heaven, she seems to have caught its poetry and its coloring, so full of charm.

"On the Sunday, Octave of Easter,* I beheld a multitude of thoughts in all sorts of colors; and, as the flowers were slight and weak, I knew that it was a symbol of the feebleness of our thoughts compared to the strength and sublimity of those that God entertained for our love in the work of the Redemption. I recognized God's goodness in receiving these same thoughts that we offer Him, being pleased with the little flowers when they spring from a heart filled with His love."

Figures crowd her writings. Her thoughts "are bees that collect honey;" the word of the Lord "is an aromatic wine that draws them." His opened side is "the hive into which they swarm, knowing that they will find there the honey of the divinity."

Jesus Christ, after Communion and the disintegration of the Sacramental species, is "a pilgrim stripped through love, covered only by a fragment of bread, and asking a lodging of the soul that has received Him. To her the Savior on the cross is "a Phœnix who dies in the air, multiplying Himself in death, and coming to life again by divine power, with a multitude of others to whom His death gives life."

In His baptism on the banks of the Jordan, He is "the tree of Paradise, planted near the current of waters, bearing fruits of happiness and leaves of health."

St. John is "the Secretary" of the Incarnate Word, inducted into office on Mount Calvary.

Imploring Our Lord to free her from her defects: "Can Thy divine charity and Thy human and loving

* Easter, 1636.

courtesy bear to see in me what is displeasing to Thee, and not remove it? Jacob lifted and removed the stone that prevented the sheep of Rachel, whom he loved, from drinking."

Speaking of St. Thomas: "I prayed him to be the forerunner of Thy Majesty to my soul."

She collects and lingers on this beautiful word of Our Lord: "Daughter, love is a master key. It opens what is closed to others. My Father has one key, love has another, and thou holdest it; hence, thou hast entered into Me, and I into thee to give thee life."

Like all pure and simple souls, Jeanne preferred figures and comparisons drawn from nature. The fields, the flowers, the dew, the sun, the stars, the verdure, the dawn, served to reproduce supernatural facts and the history of souls.

"God has made three auroras; the first is the dawn of nature in Adam, and it ended not in day but in night. The second was the dawn of grace in Mary, which led us to the Sun of Grace. The third, that of Jesus Christ, is the aurora of glory."

"The Virgin Mother is incomparable; she is that shepherdess who gave to the world the Lamb, the Lord of the nations. This Lamb is a Pastor likewise; yet He submitted to the guidance of this innocent shepherdess, who by her diligence found Him, and by her beauty drew Him to her bosom."

Her mission appeared to her under the figure of the gentle and mysterious Ruth. "I am Thy Ruth, Thou saidst to me; I glean after Thy holy reapers, to whom Thou hast recommended that they leave me in abundance the ears of Thy grace and light, in the path in which Thy goodness makes me walk." *

* Autobiography.

Speaking of the graces which she received at the crib during the Octave of Epiphany: "During the whole Octave, Thou didst treat me royally and divinely, making of my heart Thy censor, becoming my King and Pontiff with a grace too admirable for my pen to describe." *

With what grace Mother de Matel presents some single detail or feature. Her pious and meditative soul makes a poem out of a word, a seemingly unmeaning syllable. We give one instance. God is condemning man in the terrestrial Paradise.

"Thy mercy arrested the course of Thy justice until noon; † in summer, it is the hour when we pause in our fatigue. We walk slowly. Thus didst Thou, walking in the terrestrial garden, say to Adam: 'Where art thou?' giving him the opportunity of recognizing the extremity to which sin had reduced him, that he might ask of Thy mercy, forgiveness."

On the feast of Our Lady of Snows, she calls to mind the candor of the Immaculate Virgin: "If all the Saints are bleached in the blood of the Lamb, how white must be the Mother who gave her blood to the Lamb! Not every creature can see her candor, still less comprehend it. God alone can say to her: *Tota pulchra es amica mea.*" ‡

In acknowledging something received from the brother of M. de Cérisy, she writes thus graciously:

"My Dear Son in Our Lord:

"Mothers are not blamed when their children are beforehand with them, for they are still first in love

* Autobiography.

† Domini Dei deam bulentis in Paradiso ad horam post meridiem. —Gen., III, 8.

‡ Cant., IV., 7. "Thou art all fair, my beloved."

and tenderness. God has given them no command to bind them, but he has to the children, promising them a long life in the land, and the enjoyment of an eternity in heaven. The text which you cite from the prophet in the Gospel makes you acknowledge that a mother can not forget her children ; and, even though the mother, by nature might do so, the mother by grace can not. They are present to the eyes of her spirit, when absent to those of the flesh, and although your humility would conceal your virtues, you can not hide them from your brothers, and still less from your Mother, who loves you through that justice which you call goodness. She could not diminish her affection without appearing unjust in the sight of heaven and earth. Pray for her, and believe that she is, with all her heart and unchangeably, my dear son, your humble servant and good Mother and Sister, Jeanne de Matel."

The same graceful and ingenuous humility is revealed in these lines, the beginning of her correspondence with Father de Meaux, Rector of the College of Roanne, when he became her director : " Since the Holy Ghost desires, through your Reverence, to purify His temple, lodging there that most holy tabernacle, which He had fashioned in a virginal bosom, the precious body of Jesus my Spouse, it seems to me that He would have me become as matter in your hands, to be worked up as the Divine Master may inspire you. For, to myself I seem a piece of wood, weak and rough, that needs planing ; a heart strong and hardened in its inclinations, that needs the hammer of firm command ; a spirit of gold, since the good God wishes it to be charity, which is Himself, this metal requires fire for its purification, even to the extinction of its least defects. Oh, how far removed I am from all these perfections ! And yet, I must reach them, and assume new courage to follow whither you choose to order

me. I wish it, my Lord, since Thou dost will it, and I supplicate Thee to aid Thy laborer, my dear Father de Meaux, to work Thy vineyard. This you will not refuse, Reverend Father, for the Father of the family will render unto you according to your charity."

This good religious having fallen sick, she wrote to ask news of his health, and to console him, but with all delicacy and grace. "My letter would tire you, if I made it long; I will shorten it that it may tire you the less. Nor do I say this inconsiderately. In your charity you saw that you could be to me a father; but to fathers trouble is a diversion. . . . . The thorns that I suffer for you, my dear father, are to me as roses; I offer myself to my beloved Spouse, begging Him to make me a lily among thorns. Get well, and I will say a hundred *laudate Dominum omnes gentes*. This was another promise which I made yesterday in my thanksgiving, if you recover your health. See if I am not a true daughter." A little later, encouraging him to be resigned: "Your resignation must obtain from God what Abraham's did; offer yourself up as a holocaust. If it were God's will I would be the ram to die for your Reverence."

To a young girl, Miss de Serviére, who had just taken the little habit of the Order, she writes: "My dear child, and my Isaac, since you are my *laughter*, * be of great courage in offering yourself up a sacrifice on Calvary. It is the eternal Providence that has given you this mystery with the name Calvary. The ram, who is the Incarnate Word, offered himself to the Divine Father for you; His death is your life, and you can only live eternally, because in time He died for you." A touching allusion, in which Mother de Matel's piety brings together the recollections of the sacrifice

* Isaac signifies *laughter*.

of Isaac, that of the cross, and the mystic immolation of a child.

Here is another acknowledgment, sent to one of her confessors, a model of graceful writing : " The Hours which your Reverence has sent me would cause me mortification if I possessed the virtue of the Blessed Aloysius of Gonzaga, because they are gilded ; but, being far from that, I have used them in the spirit of charity, cordially accepting them from you, even as he in the spirit of humility refused that part of Saint Thomas that was gilt. In virtue of charity I accept them, and will say them in honor of Him whose head is of gold, of her who is seated at His right hand *in vestitu deaurato*, and, still more, *circumdata varietate*, * a variety in which I see humility resplendent. I hope that my only Spouse and my dear Mother will, by their grace, make my words golden, so that the interior may be gilded with a heavenly and divine gold, as the exterior is with a terrestrial and human one."

Speaking of the masqueradings in use on the days of the carnival, she finds an ingenious and unexpected condemnation of them : " The devil was the first to invent masks, by taking the form of the serpent. And, next, Adam and Eve not only covered their faces, but their shame, by a mask of seeming purity, when they committed an evident impurity, by hiding from Him who had created them."

Note how beautifully she comments on the words of Magdalen seeking the Savior in the garden : " Lord, if Thou hast hidden in Thy garden the flower that I adore, and for which I am anxious, tell me where Thou hast placed it. Tell me where I may gather that rose, the thorns of which have caused me such keen pain. Refuse not a favor that I seek with so many

* Ps., XL., 11.

tears. It is a pomegranate that can cure me with its acid sweetness. . . . If Thou wilt not permit me to bear away the flower, suffer that I water it. I have a fountain in my eyes. Where have You planted it? It is my tree of life."

This richness in the writings of Mother de Matel, even in a literary point of view, is the more remarkable because she acknowledges that she had not been carefully educated. Finding some difficulty in translating a word from the Holy Books into French, she somewhere says: "French terms do not usually possess the grace of the Latin of the Holy Scripture; hence this word is hard for me to translate into French, of which I know very little, never having tried to study it, nor being possessed of any learning, but to love Thee, divine Love, who hast deigned to be my teacher." *

If, from the heights to which Mother de Matel leads us, revealing the dogmatic side of truth, we descend to the lower, but still luminous regions, of her moral applications, which are more easily accessible, we behold a new aspect. The high summits decline, the voice of great waters is hushed; it is an undulating plain of soft murmurings. The eagle has furled his vans; the hen, affectionate and agitated by her charming solicitude, has assembled her brood, covering and warming them; teaching the ways of that heaven of which she has just contemplated the profound mysteries, the ravishing beauty; it is the ecstatic who becomes a school-mistress in the house of God, spelling with children the first words of the great book of life, which in her meditation was wide opened to her, Jesus Christ desirous of living again in souls.

And yet, if the style of Mother de Matel, become the directress of souls after having been their doctor,

* Autobiography

flows more calmly and tranquilly, one feels in reading her spiritual works a hidden warmth that issues from them, penetrating and vivifying. There is so much good sense and faith in her words that we are obliged to say, how right she is! One perceives such an unction that we are as much attracted by her reproaches as by her exhortations. Frequently, her words are trenchant as a sword ; when you least expect it, she strikes, and she reaches the very marrow of the soul, cutting off the attraction to evil, or the negligence that is ready to fix itself there through irreflection or habit.

She has just spoken of the Guardian Angels, and of the respect we owe them : "We seek to avoid only the eyes of men, witnesses easily deceived ; they see at most the outward shell of our actions, and, if we succeed in shunning their presence, we dare everything. But, meanwhile, we have near us a witness who penetrates the secrets of our heart, and reads its innermost recesses. No one has seen us, we say, complacently. No one has seen us? Well, enjoy the esteem of men whose contempt you deserve ; let them praise you, because they do not know you as you are. In the approbation which they confer, forget yourselves, if you will, blind yourselves so far as to recognize in yourself what has never been. There is a Judge of your actions,. Who has seen what was invisible to men, and who sees in you no trace of what they praise you for ; He alone will be heard in that examination that must be made of your life."

Pursuing with her reproaches the religious who cares little for her rule, and in self-defense instills the same contempt into others : "You have triumphed, I grant it, but under what standard have you fought? Is it the standard of the heavenly militia, or that of the infernal legions? Judge it yourselves by him who has reaped the whole fruit of your victory, and blush."

What more striking than this sentence passed by the most tender of mothers against those daughters who should be unfaithful to the rule: "May these rules be for you sacred and inviolable; may there be not a single one among you who does not regard herself as specially charged to keep them unchangeable, and, so to say, eternal in the house in which she dwells. Thus will you not only bear the august name of spouses of Jesus Christ, but the world itself will be glad to give it to you, because it will see that you maintain that glory. I have the sweet confidence that you will never abandon it. But, anathema, yes, anathema to her who first would meanly attempt to weaken it by her example, and, especially, by her maxims. Let her first perish, before she undertakes to make the glory of the Incarnate Word perish, of an Order that He has erected in this world only that He might shine in greater splendor."

But, no matter how great the beauty of the writings of Mother de Matel, we must not even it with that beauty of speech that we have noticed as commended by her biographers. Those who have heard the princes of eloquence, the Bishop of Tulle, for instance, or Monseigneur Bertaud, whose oratorical genius had something akin to the contemplative spirit of Mother de Matel, and who have afterwards read the cold report or analysis of their discourses, can alone form a just idea of our disadvantage in this respect, as compared with the opportunities of her contemporaries. In listening to Mother de Matel, it was as to a flood of divine eloquence, or as though a door had been opened into heaven. Then, returning to himself, when the hearer wished to analyze, he found only some remnants of these ineffable riches, and Jeanne, herself, on trying to put to paper the treasures which she had scattered broadcast, found it impossible.

The writings of Mother de Matel have been reproached with such a profusion of thought that it seems to lose itself in repetitions, negligences and incessant involutions. This is only apparently so. Examine thoroughly, and you will find that the great contemplative, whilst seeming to lose the thread of her discourse in some pious distraction, was all the while pursuing the tenor of a way perfectly ordered. But the order is rather in the thought than in the language. The subject which she treats does not present itself to her, as to us, in the unity that belongs to the head of a chapter, or the annunciation of a division. Behind the picture which she draws, there are, in a second or a third plane, others that engage her attention. They are, to her, incessant visions, to which she is ever recurring. It is the Holy Trinity, with its grandeur and operations. It is the Word, in the mystery of His Incarnation, the angels with their prerogatives. These great subjects are present to her; how can she refrain from speaking of them? She is constantly bringing them forward, or, rather, they thrust themselves forward in her discourse, as in her meditation, and so it is, that, always seeing them, she appears to forget herself in repetitions.

In connection with her writings, Mother de Matel has preserved an interesting anecdote in which we once more see the supernatural that mixes itself up with all her works. We have remarked with what constancy Sister Gravier accompanied the foundress, sharing all her journeys and visitations. It was to her that was committed the providential mission of perpetual secretary of the illustrious seer. Thus it was: "In the year 1633," says Jeanne, "this secretary observing that I had a fluxion of the eyes, by which I was prevented from copying neatly what I wrote with great difficulty, besought the great St. Joseph, of his

charitable pity, to enable her to decipher easily my handwriting, so as to copy it for me, which seems to have been granted ; for, in a few days she wrote so perfectly that she closely imitated my writing, and could easily read what before she had difficulty to understand. And no one else has been able to be so assiduous in this service and assistance since 1633, because I cannot dictate, but must write with my own hand, which can scarcely follow the light that instructs and guides me ; moreover, the infirmity of my eyes has rendered my handwriting since then more difficult to decipher, and no one could read it did she not copy it off neatly.'' *

This confidence of Mother de Matel's explains to us, as remarks one of her daughters, and we take note of it in passing, how errors may, and necessarily must have slipped into her writings, either at the time of her dictation, or when, her hand not being able to keep pace with her inspiration, she was not properly interpreted by her secretary, or when her suffering did not permit her to read over and correct what she had written. So, too, may be explained the difference between certain of her treatises, of which some, full of method and sequence, were set in order after a first sketch, whilst others are somewhat incoherent, and are the results of a dictation of hurried thoughts, not afterwards revised.

In conclusion, let us say a few words on the authenticity and the moral integrity of Mother de Matel's works. These two characters are guaranteed by the reputation which they enjoyed, even in the life-time of their authoress. At a time when religious pre-occupations engrossed all minds, a writing of the Lyonnese seer was a treasure to the most elevated

* Autobiography.

intellects. Those who were the first to enjoy the feast hastened to share it with others; they made copies of the precious manuscript, and the Sisters of the Incarnate Word often derived their first knowledge of these riches by communications from the outside. Thus it was that Mother de Belly, that woman of mind and heart, who labored so intelligently to preserve and put in order the writings of the foundress, declares that she obtained and transcribed the treatise of the four marriages, one of the most beautiful, "from a copy taken in 1623 from the original, by M. Antoine de Vichi Champron, Count of Saint-Jean of Lyons, nephew of the Marquis d' Evaine, both of them friends of our venerable Mother." In comparing the different manuscript editions, and the different treatises, we remark a conformity of form and detail which proves their common origin and guarantees their integrity.

Little by little, and in the course of their foundations, the several houses took care to gain for themselves a treasure of which they knew the value. These copies, carefully revised, and sometimes the originals, were preserved, as we have said, with the greatest care. When the Order began again to flourish, the convent of Evaux, in the diocese of Limoges, made for its own use an edition of the writings preserved during the Revolution and taken to Azérables, the first foundation, by three ancient sisters, who had belonged to the Convents of Avignon and Lyons. It is on these, of certain origin, and on an edition of the autobiography, furnished by the Convent of Lyons from the original text, that we have written this history. *

* Every facility has since been offered to us by the Convent of Lyons to acquaint ourselves with the original text itself, and with the most ancient copies. We intend to profit by this favor in the next edition, and in the works that we design, to the end of making known, as it deserves, the Order of the Incarnate Word, its members and the writings of its foundress.

CHAPTER III.

SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY OF JEANNE DE MATEL.

The Spirit of God has said of the Saints that their tomb is a pulpit, and their silence in death a sermon. The loving songstress of the Incarnate Word has merited this grace. Her lips are closed, but her works, her writings, still live and speak. She speaks especially in her virtues.

In the path which our readers have traversed with us, they must surely have felt their souls touched by a secret and holy charm ; Jeanne, to whose gentle conversations we have listened, whose friends and disciples we have become, is so good, so holy! Before closing this pilgrimage, before separating from her, we must open the perfumed vase of her heart, and, from her virtues, observed one by one, at our ease, form a bouquet that we can keep.

Let us first gather a few of her thoughts on the spiritual life. Uniting them to those that we have already met in the course of this work, we shall have the portrait of Mother de Matel, as an ascetic, theologian, and a directress of souls.

What a beautiful analysis does she not give us of the process employed by Our Savior to gain us to Himself! "My divine Love explained to me the means which He uses to catch souls, and make them His prey. He told me that His sacred body, on account of the wounds caused through His love, and of which He preserves the principal ones, even in His state of glory, had become as a net which he cast in their path. This net, so different from others, which

we avoid when we notice them, we must attentively consider, in order to be captured, for then, far from trying to escape it, we should fear not to be taken.

"But, He employs other weapons to secure His prey. He told me that His soul was as a bow, of which His divinity was the arrow, to wound souls, and that His wisdom was as hands with which to hold them with as much gentleness as strength; thus it was that He caught His prey on which He complacently fed." *

Considered from this point of view, the conduct of souls is a kind of holy conspiracy with the most ardent desires of the Savior.

On this ministry Mother de Matel has some touching thoughts, and the confidences of Our Lord are full of consolation for the priest: "Thou art the vineyard spoken of in the Canticle of Canticles, the Savior said to me; it belongs to the Prince of Peace, but He entrusts it to others for its care and cultivation, contenting Himself with its fruits." . . . "These faithful laborers," she adds, in the name of all those who are the objects of this pious care in the Church, "will be liberally and magnificently rewarded for their pains, by this lovingly jealous King, not in His divine nature, which is essentially good, but through a special favor to myself. The least of the services they have done for me will be repaid by a thousand graces and favors."

Temptation, especially those humiliating revolts of the flesh, is one of the great trials of souls desirous of remaining faithful to their Savior. This is the consoling point of view from which Mother de Matel considers this mystery: "Jesus Christ could not, because of the dignity of His person, be subjected to such temptations. He did not, therefore, glorify His

* Autobiography.

Father by such combats, and yet He desired to glorify Him in all ways. Hence, that which He did not experience in His physical body, He would undergo in His mystic body ; that is, in the faithful, of whom He is the head, in whom, as His members, He really suffers what they themselves suffer."

What is sin ? Mother de Matèl, as usual, regarding the question from the highest point of view, and seeking light in God, answers : "God is love ; He does all that He wills in heaven and on earth by His love. That which is done without His love, is contrary to His good will ; it is sin, the object of His hatred. As He essentially loves Himself, for He is essentially love, He hates sin, which is opposed to this essential love. God desires that man, whom He loves, should receive the love subsisting in Him. Sin alone is the unfortunate failure, the nothing which the Word did not make ; it is the execrable defect, the object of God's hatred, Who is obliged to punish it with eternal justice. This punishment is foreign to the divine love, which is not inclined to punish.

"If God were mortal, He would Himself die before He would see the death of a sinner, a death which is sin. This death God has not made ; it entered the world through the wicked envy of the demon, and the disobedience of man. Michael banished it from heaven when He vanquished Lucifer, the raging dragon, who drew with him the third part of the stars. God was not satisfied with sending His angels to banish it from the world ; He sent His only and well beloved Son, who is His own dear life, to drive out this death and to precipitate it into the abyss."

On this same subject she has words that resound and startle like a clap of thunder : "Sin is nothingness, or a failure, which, not having subsistence, still

offers an unfortunate resistance. Physical nothingness, opposed to being, does not resist, since God creates being from nothing; but he does not produce love in sin. Having enumerated to her many proofs of His goodness, even towards the bad angels and demons, Our Lord said to her one day: 'What is more admirable, is, that, essentially hating sin, I leave this nothing, My capital enemy, reigning in the angels and men in hell. My goodness makes Me suffer this nothing that I have not made, and that I will hate eternally in man and angel. As I love My essence, so do I hate sin."

In the chapter, *Jeanne de Matel and the Life of God*, we have seen beautiful theological developments of grace. Let us, in passing, secure this thought: "Charity is an ocean on the way of saintly traffic; charity is a path that leads the soul to the term of payment for its merits, and the surplus that God adds to it."

And this is how Our Lord celebrates His mysterious union with souls: "I am the grafted Word; this is the season for grafting the trees of earth; and it is the one in which I wish to graft Myself on thee, and on those whom thou dost recommend. I wish to draw to Myself thy whole substance, and to change thee into Myself, for without Me you are wild trees bearing fruits spoiled by the worm of self-love, which cannot be pleasing to the taste of My Father, until I change you into Myself by My own power." *

Under the title, *Way of the Saints*, Jeanne gives us, by way of commentary on the beginning of the Sermon of the Mount, a striking abridgment of the code of perfection, which we shall find more developed, and under a different form, in the Treatise on

* Letters to Father Jacquinot.

the Beatitudes. "The way of the Saints," she says, "is that pointed out by the Savior in the Beatitudes of the Gospel. . . . . The first is poverty of spirit, which requires a complete spoliation to correspond with divine simplicity, and for the possession of the kingdom of heaven invisible to the eyes of the body. We must brush off the dust of the world; heaven and earth cannot coexist in the same heart. . . . . Hence the saints have said that their portion was in the land of the living. They were made poor in the land of the dying. Their kindness makes them possess the land, that is, the Humanity of the Incarnate Word. . . . . No one troubles the possessions of the kind-hearted, because no one attacks them but is won by their good nature. The tears of the saints merit the consolations of heaven. They weep; (1) because they see themselves still far from the kingdom of God, for which they sigh; (2) because divine truth and eternal life are despised; (3) because they are children who do not behold their father and mother: God and the Blessed Virgin are hidden in the heavens. Happy tears distilled on earth, to be the sources of a thousand holy desires!

"Famished souls hunger for the bread of God, the doing of His divine will. They hunger and thirst for justice, and the God of their heart feeds them with food that satisfies them, and strengthens them to enter on the path to heaven which is so difficult of ascent.

"The merciful have pity: (1) For the afflictions of the Savior, the most afflicted of men; (2) for those hearts that are beset with trouble; (3) for the corporal necessities of their neighbor. . . .

"Those who are pure of heart shall see God, because they are cleansed and purified, and desire only

to see Him. The eye asks but for light, in which alone it takes pleasure; light is its object, and the heart, which is all eye and light, can occupy itself only with the divine light. This purity of heart is acquired by regeneration in water, and by the sweetness of the Spirit, which is fire.

"The peacemakers, having already conquered their enemies, and ended their combats by glorious victories, enjoy beforehand the inheritance of their Father. . . . And those who suffer persecution for justice sake are blessed, for their sufferings are not in expiation of sin, but for the advancement of the glory of God. In the first beatitude they receive heaven in exchange for the goods of the world, which they despise, but in this last they acquire it by their sufferings, endured in the cause of Jesus, Who gained it by His cross."

During the Octave of the Epiphany, 1637, Our Lord explained to her in a sensible form, "the difference of state in souls, which are all bound by different chains."

"The first chain is of iron, which binds and weighs down the obstinate sinners of this world, and the damned in hell. The second is of lead, which may be softened and melted by fire; it binds these souls that are in mortal sin, but are not obstinate. . . . The third chain is of bright gold, which is rather an ornament, a crown, and a collar of rank, than a bond. This chain belongs to those who follow God through love. The fourth, which is marvelous, is composed of light, and is not heavy like that of gold. The souls bound by it are enlightened, not chained. They are led by the splendor of eternal light, the Word, their way, their truth and their life."

The theologian of the Incarnate Word stops at this resplendent figure, and, ravishing from the heart of her

Spouse the secret of His operations of love in these privileged souls, she gives us an account which is too faithful not to have been read in her own heart.

"God dwells in such souls and reproduces Himself as often as He illumines them, giving them a strong and sweet love. To these fortunate souls He gives a share in His joy, as to His well-beloved spouses. Together with light they receive the sacred unction of queens. This light gives them an impulse towards the desire of eternal glory. They are bright as the sun; they are clear, white and silvery as the moon.

"The sun has no color, only light. These souls, so happily bound, have neither color nor tint of created things, only the white of innocence. Although voyagers, they enjoy beforehand the wages of beatitude, by their communication with the Lamb, who conducts them to the fountains of life, and by the light that emanates from His brow and eyes. And, as light was made for the eye, and the eye for the light, so these souls belong only to God, and are all for God, and God is all to them, as though all for them alone. . . .

"The divine Majesty, seated in the soul as on a throne, sheds His loving rays throughout His court. The soul basks in the light that falls directly upon it without dazzling it, because the Holy Spirit produces in it an admirable cloud, that serves it for shade and delightful refreshment, and meanwhile it rests and reposes in the noon-tide of purest love, having gathered, in an abundant measure, the fruits of the divine benediction. This cloud seems to dissolve gently, and distill an agreeable dew, which infiltrates into the soul and causes the germination of numberless graces. The Savior, Himself, is found amongst them, according to the desire of the Prophet: *Rorate, cœli desuper et*

nubes pluant justum; aperiatur terra et germinet Salvatorem. *

"The Sacred Humanity finds itself in an admirable way present in such a soul, an extension of the loving Incarnation, producing wonderful unions, which are new favors. Whilst it dwells in the soul, it is the light of that little world, according to the words of the Savior. In that happy time Jesus Christ causes the soul to work wonderfully by His light. He produces in it a day of which the joy is very great, and all the powers of the soul exclaim: *Hæc dies quam fecit Dominus, exultemus et lætemur in ea.*" †

One of the essential elements of the Christian life is the spirit of sacrifice. Sacrifice is the due of every hour. It is all important, therefore, to know how to accept it, and to offer it up in such a manner as to make it profitable. "God made me see the difference that exists in sacrifices. Although Abraham had only the will to offer up his son, God rewarded him abundantly. Jephta, on the contrary, sacrificed in reality, and yet God did not receive his sacrifice as He did that of Abraham, because the father of the faithful was induced rather by the desire of pleasing God, and not, as in the case of Jephta, by the fear of displeasing Him. . . . .

"There are souls that sacrifice for their own interest, in thanksgiving for favors received, or for evils avoided, or to obtain new graces, and this is not simply for the divine glory. God accepts such sacrifices, and receives them in the odor of sweetness, but He does not consume them, and, if I may so express

* Isaias, XIV. 8, "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just; let the earth be opened and bud forth the Savior."

† Ps., CXVII., 24. "This is the day which the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice therein."

myself, He is not nourished by them as by those that are presented by large and generous souls, impelled solely by zeal for His glory, as was Elias."

This spirit of sacrifice does not consist with indifference, and Jeanne could not tolerate indifference and tepidity. "Let us banish from our hearts all indifference to the interests of Jesus Christ ; let us be alive to all that interests His glory. Let us grieve, or rejoice, according as we see Him outraged, or abandoned, or when we see zeal in defending and augmenting His glory. . . . . To witness with a tranquil eye the daily loss of His glory, or the still greater diminution that threatens it, is that fighting under the banner of St. Michael? There was not one of his angels who did not march to the conflict with Lucifer ; those of whom I speak are only spectators, and it is indifferent to them on which side victory is declared. What a monster such a Christian appears !"

The first quality of sanctity is courage ; discouragement peoples hell. Hence Jeanne de Matel does not hesitate to insist on the harm that discouragement works in the soul.

"My imperfections following me as the shadow does the body, for there is no shadow where there is no light, and when the body is not illumined, my soul was grieved and discouraged, and, though this seemed to have some foundation in myself, yet was it pure cowardice. God made me understand how this distress and discouragement injured me, by recalling the words of David: 'The iniquity of my heel, or my way, shall envelop me.' This iniquity is no other than the faults on which we dwell constantly after having committed them, though only through weakness, and because despair of correcting them, when we fall in spite of our resolutions, prevents us from striv-

ing to correct them. I saw that this distress was the source of that weariness which induces the soul, whose courage is weakened, to draw back from the combat; she no longer wants to fight, and remains in her own weakness. A soldier who hides because he fears danger is a coward, and unworthy of his profession. David, who was accounted a great captain, thought himself dishonored when he turned his back, not only on the enemies who invaded his country, but on those who waged war against his innocence. It was especially in this last warfare that he was skilled, because God had taught him how to wield to advantage the arms that he employed. It is for this that he thanks Him in these words: "Blessed be the Lord my God, Who teacheth my hands to fight and my fingers to war; my mercy and my refuge, my support and my deliverer." * The warrior king was humble, therefore did he trust in God. Fear causes great damage to an army; discouragement does no less for the soul in which it inspires a fear that makes it shrink from everything. It makes it act as did Adam when God asked where he was, after his sin.

"When the soul has sinned, it draws back from the approach of God. Fear and mistrust sometimes lead it into despair, as with Cain and Judas. This last sinned more by his despair, which was the iniquity of his heel, than by his treason, criminal as that was. The Blessed Virgin, full of courage as of innocence, was, from the instant of her conception, an army in battle array; she crushed the head of the serpent who lay in wait for her heel, † and, by her great confidence in Him who gave her the courage and heart to attack the dragon, she carried confusion into hell. That God, in Whom she trusted, gave her strength to

* Ps., CXLIII., 1 and 2.

† Genesis, III., 15.

triumph over everything. She always marched generously towards perfection, growing like the dawn which increases to the fullness of the perfect day, never having been arrested by all the snares laid for her by the demon. Her heel has crushed the head of the prince of darkness, with an ease that proved the weakness of her enemy. Such is the victory the soul may expect which dismisses from its heart all distrust.

"Are you ignorant, I would say to it in such mistrust, of the power of Him who is your Spouse? What can you not do when He sustains you? Why, then, be troubled by fear? Behold Him, the King of glory, who comes to you invested in His Strength, to overthrow your enemies, who are His own. Learn to know yourself, and you shall find that, in the strength that He communicates, you are as an army in battle array, * and that, like the Spouse, you can challenge your companions to find weakness in you, that they may compare you to the choir of an army which not only pleases by the beauty of its notes, but inflames its courage; your step alone appals your enemies, and delights your Spouse, who already crowns your victory, the result of the confidence through which you triumph over everything in Heaven and on earth."

In studying Mother de Matel as a contemplative, we saw to what a degree of union she had been raised. We cannot, then, be surprised that in such a school she should have learned how to console those who are afflicted with dryness and spiritual desolation. It is thus she speaks of the different states of the soul in its relations with God.

"When a soul awakes to devotion, it makes itself little, saying that it knows nothing, and that it wishes to be instructed in virtue. When it has been freed

* Canticle, VI., 9.

from its vices and evil inclinations, it hears an interior voice, which sings of the glory of God in the highest and peace to men, of good will. Then it begins to grow in years, prudence, wisdom and strength before God and men.

"Having, through divine favor, arrived at a sublime degree, she ascends the mount of perfection, and detaches herself from all creatures by a great gift of prayer, in which she is transfigured in company of her favorites, the meekness of Moses, the ardent zeal of Elias, the faith of Peter, the hope of James, the loving charity of John. Her countenance is like the sun, for God illumines it; her vesture is white as snow, for she loves nothing that is not chaste and pure. God shows her clearly that she is His beloved daughter, in whom He is and has been well pleased. The soul thinks only of the excessive love of the divinity become man, and of the humanity become divine. Faith exclaims: Oh, how good it is to be here! Let us make three tabernacles; meekness, zeal and the glory of the living God must dwell therein.

"After this state of light and joy, the soul falls to the ground, not through sin, but by the splendor of the light and the power of the divine voice. The Savior has to touch its feeble powers, and strengthen them, saying: Fear not, lift up thy heart, but do not chant the triumph of life before thou hast vanquished death. Silence must be kept until the day of the true resurrection, which comes after the death of all imperfections.

"In the meantime, she must descend the mountain, and humble herself. Intense and severe sufferings must be undergone; fears, coldness, disgust, darkness, desolation, death to self and to all consolation. The soul complains of this abandonment of the divine Father, which subjects her to the anguish of death.

and almost leads her to the gates of hell, for she is in palpable darkness. . . . Finding no safety in herself, all is affliction. The cross is alone her rest, though a painful one, and she chooses it." . . . .

After this exposition of the state of desolation, dryness and darkness, Jeanne addresses to those who, like herself, have experienced them, words of consolation and encouragement.

"The Apostle says that no one can be crowned who has not legitimately fought. We must fight, we must make a great and ample provision of patience. Who can lose courage, who has seen Jesus Christ carrying His cross, and nailed to it? Is not the affliction which thou sufferest a sign of His love? . . . . If the soul is resolved to please God, for love of Himself, she will make little account of all that is not God, or for God, knowing that she is of Him, by Him, to Him and for Him. Let her say: This night, which Thou hast permitted, is my illumination and delight, I am glad to suffer, since Thou hast justly ordered it. Darkness shall not separate me from Thee, neither the day of prosperity, nor the night of adversity. . . . It is in the desert, and in the path of dryness, that Thou art admirable in Thy love, making holy the soul who is deprived of delight. For Thy love I suffer this aridity, which is a great mercy, consuming the imperfections of self love.

"The faithful soul that so behaves herself in abandonment, is the well-beloved of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost."

Distractions are another trial to souls given to prayer. Mother de Matel thus speaks of them: "My divine Spouse, in His goodness, deigned to show me how we should profit by distractions in prayer. We must, then, He said, praise the divine permanency,

remembering that God is unchangeable, and that creatures are subject to change, and so humble ourselves for our inconstancy. He added that we might imitate those hunters who, having missed the greater game which they sought, take that which they find, though little, even small birds, of which they make delicate dishes, which they serve up to invalids.

" A soul that is distracted in prayer is sick, whether the distraction springs from unfaithfulness, or comes as a trial from Him who wishes to see her perseverance in prayer. She must try to banish distractions, even as Abraham tried to drive the carniverous birds from the victims ; this she can do by humbling herself on seeing her want of fervor, and in thus offering herself an humble and afflicted sacrifice on account of the distractions that buzz like flies through her mind ; for, as says St. Augustine, flies do not rest upon a boiling vessel. Her contrite heart and humble spirit will be a sacrifice which God will not reject. By such conduct she accomplishes His will, and offers Him her good desires, like little birds, which the fire of her love renders worthy of His taste."

Jeanne has some beautiful pages on the effect of humility and pride upon the destinies of souls : "Saul is aniointed and crowned King, by Samuel, as is David also. Saul seems much more humble than David, for he excuses himself, and refuses the honor, whilst David accepts it. The humility of Saul is rejected, while the seeming vanity of David is crowned ; for Saul was humble only in appearance, David was so in fact.

" Pride led Saul to desire the crown, and this same pride, when he considered only himself, led him to refuse it, because he did not find in himself the strength to sustain its weight. David, on the contrary, confiding only in the power of God, who offered it, accepted ;

and, counting only on Him Who had placed it on his head, never hesitated at the most painful and hazardous actions, when there was need to defend its glory.

"Saul had only a low feeling for God, and a high opinion of himself. When he found himself suddenly elevated to the sovereign dignity, he forgot himself in his unexpected change of fortune. Thus he acted from his own judgment, without attending to the oracles of Samuel. His faults may appear light in comparison to those of David, which included adultery and homicide, but it must be noted that Saul sinned in a spirit of independence and revolt against the will of God. Moreover, when rebuked by the prophet, instead of acknowledging his fault, he tried to screen it by his excuses, which was the cause of his losing the throne.

"David behaved differently, even in his sin, which was most enormous and odious. This had its origin in human weakness. But this excuse the criminal would not advance to diminish his guilt; it was enough that Nathan should reproach him, for him to condemn himself: 'I have sinned against the Lord.' He does not ask the prophet to continue to honor him before the people. He can only accuse himself and repent."

One of the most beautiful of all the treatises of Mother de Matel, is that of the *Eight Beatitudes*.

She considers the spiritual life as a temple that is to be built. "The foundation on which I shall rest the columns of the temple is the Faith. On this shall I place the eight Beatitudes, which shall be eight pillars. Two shall face the East, two the West, two the North, and two the South. The wall inclosing the area of the temple shall be hope; I shall speak later of the pavement and the gates."

We here give a rapid analysis of the treatise, and of the doctrine which it teaches.

The first column is peace.

Jeanne exhibits God everywhere, seeking to establish peace ; in heaven, disturbed by the revolt of the angels ; in the world, after the entry of sin. He has it sung above the crib of the Incarnate Word. There are three kinds of peace : peace with God, which confers grace ; peace with one's self, which arises from the calming of passions, and submission to the divine will, and peace with the neighbor, which we should try not only to preserve, but to establish everywhere around us.

The second column is gentleness. Gentleness or kindness was the victorious weapon with which Jesus Christ conquered His Kingdom, and the Apostles the universe. By it we shall gain souls ; we shall win the love of the Blessed Virgin, so gentle and humble ; we shall possess Jesus Christ, and guard our souls.

The third column is poverty. By freeing the soul from all attachments, it confers the liberty that is necessary to aspire to the celestial inheritance ; even here below, heaven becomes its only treasure, God its sole master. In order to be perfect, this poverty must renounce not only all earthly goods, but even the most innocent pleasures, the consolations of piety, one's own will ; in a word, all that is not God.

The fourth column is purity of heart, a total and absolute purity which cuts off all that is contrary to God. Amongst all the exercises of piety, this, perhaps, is the most repugnant to us, and yet, that alone would suffice to arrive at high perfection ; and, after all, with all the helps at hand, purity of heart is easier for us than for many others who have attained it. If we are far from having it, we owe it to our cowardice ; let us practice good will, be simple and straightforward, an enemy to slight faults, and the Holy Spirit will supply us with the means of rising higher.

The fifth column is mercy, so often praised in Holy Scripture as one of the attributes of God, and so recommended by the Savior. We must exercise it towards God, aggrieved by our sins, our negligence and our meanness, consoling Him by our ardor ; then, towards our neighbor, whom Our Lord gives us that we may help him in his material and spiritual need, especially by prayer and by mortification, which associates us with zealous works ; by instruction and example, by mutual edification, so precious a help to the community ; by a pious and vigilant discretion in all necessary intercourse with the world.

The sixth column is that of holy tears. We should weep because earth is an exile. We should weep for our sins, for the danger of falling again into them, in terror of the judgments of God, and the uncertainty of salvation. And yet this holy sorrow must be accompanied in the soul by a sincere joy for the glory of Jesus Christ, His perfections, the majesty of His second coming. If we sincerely love our neighbor, we shall find a cause for our tears in his miseries of soul and body, with which a generous charity will cause us to sympathize ; we will take a lively interest in the conversion of sinners, asking light to their blindness, strength to put an end to their hesitancy, and to raise them from their fall. We shall have compassion on just souls who are tempted, on infidels and heretics, and we will come to their assistance. In reading this chapter of the Beatitudes, we may recognize that spirit of zeal which dictated to one of the princes of mystic theology of our times, Father Faber, the beautiful pages of his *All for Jesus*.

The seventh column is hunger and thirst for justice. In this chapter Jeanne makes war against "those weak and imperfect desires for perfection, which never manifest themselves in any generous

effort."—"A man impelled by great hunger and thirst, is restrained by no fear of danger. Thus it is with a soul possessed of a hunger and thirst for justice."—The contrary state is in opposition to the advances made to us by Our Savior in His promises; it is a "dangerous, and, perhaps, a criminal state, one that is morally impossible, according to the unanimous sentiment of the Holy Fathers, who do not hesitate to say that not to advance in perfection is to go back." The religious who should resign herself to it would weakly abandon what she had sought, would retract her holy engagements, and renounce the end of an Institute in which she had placed her glory and happiness.

The love of perfection has, even here below, its sweetest recompense; it places the soul in an anticipated heaven by the affectionate familiarity which it establishes between her and God, by the testimony of her conscience, by the confidence that results therefrom, by the sentiment of the love that inundates her.

This hunger and thirst show themselves by a constant fidelity in little things. Jeanne develops this essential point by serious considerations, which would alone form an excellent treatise on the subject.

The eighth column is persecution for justice sake. It is the absolute renunciation of all that can flatter nature and self-love; persecutions are the crown of sanctity, the finishing touch to our portrait of Jesus Christ, whether they are directed against us directly on His account, or indirectly on occasion of our virtues; they happen everywhere, even in regular communities, on account of imperfections, defects of character, or through an imagination that creates evils for itself. The sources of these different sufferings, which are

indispensable to the faithful, are the devil, the world and our passions. We suffer persecution for the sake of justice, when, in the midst of spiritual trials, we remain faithful to our duties without suffering ourselves to give way: "These trials thus become the touch-stone of pure love, and are a great favor." We suffer persecution for justice sake when we resist our passions with energy and constancy; when we submissively accept in our state, our relations, our diseases, that which mortifies and grieves us; when we suffer for God's sake, or relieve with moderation the incommodities of the season, and the fatigue of our labors.

Regarding humility as the pavement of the spiritual temple, which she is building to the Incarnate Word, Mother de Matel gives us on that virtue a treatise which is a masterpiece. God communicates Himself by preference to the humble; it is through them that He acts, in them that He reposes. He has for them a most tender care. The Word, having made Himself by His Incarnation a man of humiliation and sorrow, is the more inclined towards humble souls. The humble soul is a joy to the Savior, who espouses his interests. The practice of humility is a summary of gospel morality, a key to the Kingdom of Heaven for the Christian as for His Master; a sure means of resembling Jesus Christ, and of becoming one of the jewels of His crown, the guardian of innocence and virtue, a buckler against human respect, an incessant appeal for the abundant graces of God, an open fountain for the sinner, a sure presage of salvation. And how, on the other hand, can we allow ourselves to be overcome by pride, which displeases God, renders our prayers of no avail, and causes the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ! How can we thus shut off all access to our heart, dare to rob Him of His glory, expose ourselves

to the sharpest shafts of His anger, and disarm ourselves in the face of temptations the most delicate !

Mother de Matel, in this connection, insists on the advantage and necessity of combatting sensual inclinations by the interior and exterior exercise of humility. This, as she proves, is a sovereign remedy, too frequently forgotten by souls that desire to remain pure. Humility and confidence, these are the two wings by which we may lift ourselves above the filth of the senses.

She ends the chapter by wise counsels to superiors on the exercise of authority.

The crowning of the spiritual temple is charity. Enumerating the principal motives of our love of Jesus Christ, Mother de Matel insists on the following, which we can merely indicate : God desires it ;—He employs His authority torealize that desire ;—He sets this as the price of man's happiness in time, and his glory in eternity ;—He proposes the model, having constituted His Son the object of His complacency and tenderness, and occupying Himself solely on earth through the Holy Spirit, with drawing all hearts, and procuring His glory ;—He has made this the condition of His love for men, the possession and love of Jesus Christ being the love of the personal and living God for a soul ;—finally, Jesus Christ Himself solicits it by a most sweet and touching plea, and He has deserved it in every way, and does not cease to earn it in heaven where He does not cease to love us.

It is in this chapter that are found most precious views on the misfortune of a soul that does not sincerely love Jesus Christ ;—on prayer made in His Name, and in union with Him, regarded as Head of the mystic body of the Church, as Redeemer, as the Spouse of the religious soul ;—on the vain fears of those who

fear the sanctity that is incumbent on the spouses of Jesus Christ, and who cast themselves blindly into the world, on the pretext that their salvation will be there more easily secured ;—on the sanctification of suffering, and, in fine, on the Holy Eucharist, the Passion, and the happiness of heaven, particularly as sought in view of Jesus Christ.

This treatise on the Beatitudes, which forms by itself a volume of the manuscript works of the pious foundress, is, as we see, a complete treatise on the obligations of the Christian life, and the duties of the religious soul. The purest and sweetest doctrine flows as in a full stream in these touching pages. . . . . It is in turn a flame that burns, or a wave that cools ; it is always the strongest, the most tender love, expressing itself in affectionate considerations drawn from the meditation of Holy Scripture, and at the foot of the Tabernacle. On the day when the writings of Mother de Matel acquire the publicity they deserve, I can promise my readers a very great profit in perusing them.

CHAPTER IV.

HER FAITH.

This chapter, it would seem, should be the longest in the life of Mother de Matel, and it will be the shortest. The reason is very plain. The foundress of the Order of the Incarnate Word was so diligent in deriving from faith the inspiration of her designs, and the motives of her works, that to do justice to her spirit of faith would be to write again the story of her life.

The habit of heavenly communications had replaced in her the mystic and half-veiled light of exile by an almost face to face sight of the celestial country. "She had ever," says one of her historians, "a faith so lively and so firm, that in all things she was guided by the authority of the eternal truth. Her spirit, the extraordinary perfection of which was admired by the most enlightened, had the simplicity of a child in the things of God. The pleasure found by some in doubting the mysteries of religion, the difficulties which they discover, the assurance with which they contemn certain principles of the interior life, were so many wonders which she failed to comprehend. One of her greatest cares was every day of her life to offer up her good works and prayers for the conversion of heretics, and a salutary increase of faith in all believers." * At the end of a meditation on the Resurrection of Our Lord, having recalled the faith of the Apostles, and the hesitancy of St. Thomas, she adds: "As for myself, I have so much facility to believe all the mysteries of

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

our faith, that even the most obscure, if I may so say, are to me the most credible. I adore them in al humility."

She has left many sublime pages on the mysteries. Perhaps none are more moving than that which she wrote on the feast of St. Peter of Alexandria, November 26th, 1638. Her contemplation had turned on the affirmations of the Nicene Creed, on the Divinity of the Word, His life, His death, His Church. She interrupts her work to transcribe this profession o faith, from beginning to end, signs it with her blood, and adds: "Eternal Word, I take exceeding pleasure in professing this admirable symbol, which the Holy Ghost, proceeding from Thee and the Father, dictated. He is the Spirit of Truth who teaches the Holy Catholic Church, of which I am the daughter, and in which, with Thy grace, I wish to live and die; this belief and confession I have written and signed with my blood, as an irrevocable profession that I should wish to seal with my death." Then, thrilling with enthusiasm for the faith, and desirous of associating her daughters in her ardors: "O, my Lord, and my God, how happy the martyrs were in being Thy witnesses! How I envy them, without wishing to deprive them of their glory! May my life, and that of the daughters of Thy Congregation, be a perpetual martyrdom!"

It is one of the most certain marks of the spirit of faith in a soul, a particular grace accorded to the saints, to be able to rise from the presence or remembrance of earthly and temporary things to the thought or anticipation of heavenly and eternal riches. . . . There is nothing in this world, even its unhappiness and deformities, or that worst of all, its uncleanness, sin, which can not help the exiled soul in its pilgrimage to rise to the splendors of grace and glory. Thus

it was that the contagion that ravaged Lyons in the absence of Mother de Matel became an occasion of raising her soul to God in a vigorous expansion of love by her gratitude, and a desire full of maternal and prophetic tenderness for her Order.

"On the day of St. Roch, 1636, being unwell, and considering that everyone was invoking this saint to be delivered from the epidemic, love furnished me a new industry, and made me ask for a novel contagion, in which, by a divine contact, we might receive not this evil (the plague), but that ardor which causes the death of the senses, and that fire that sanctifies the soul. This contagion exists between the three divine Persons, and the Word introduced it into the world, by the contact of His Humanity, curing the soul, and purifying the body. I could say: His love makes me chaste, His contact makes me pure. . . .

"I thanked my Spouse that, during the deluge of this tempest of evil, He had sent me away from Lyons as a dove, and had brought me back to the Ark of the Congregation, after the plague, with the olive branch of the Incarnate Word, that name having been made known to me in my journey. I asked that I might bear this olive branch all the days of my life, and that it would please the divine Father not to let me be deprived of it at the hour of my death, that I might know Him for all eternity. I begged that it might be given to all the daughters of the Order, as He had handed it down to all generations, from Abraham's time to the day when He became Incarnate. . . . I prayed that He might be pleased to purify all those who should love the Order for love of Him, a grace that I besought for them, together with a contagion of grace."

The solicitude of Mother de Matel, influenced by the spirit of faith, descends to the most touching

details. Here is a beautiful instance: Through respect for the sanctity of the union which, as spouses, the religious contract on the days of their betrothal, and their spiritual nuptials with the Savior, she often insists in her writings on the antiquity and propriety of the family feast usual on such days in the majority of communities. She makes it a law to her daughters. One may smile, but it is edifying.

Jeanne sees God, seeks God in the most insignificant creatures; it is not surprising, then, that she should easily recognize His action in His ministers. By the following true and ingenious comparison she accounts for the affectionate confidence entertained by a penitent for the confessor: "It is not strange that the infant should turn to its wet-nurse as quickly as to its mother, since the latter does not visit it as often as the former when it is yet an infant; but, when it is older, it knows that the mother had it nursed to her own sacrifice, and loves her the more, without diminution of that reasonable affection which it owes to the nurse, and which is no longer one of greed, since it no longer needs nourishment. That is meant for heaven, for, so long as you are on earth, you are infants." * A child she remained, and with a charming ingenuousness of faith. She never took a resolution, or began a work, without having long "consulted the oracle." Her life was spent in listening to the Incarnate Word, in obeying Him, and causing Him to live in her, and in her work.

* Letters to Father de Meaux.

CHAPTER V.

HER HOPE AND TRUST IN GOD.

Faith reveals to the Christian the horizon of eternity. She shows him God, the Sovereign Lord and Master, a tender Father, Friend and Redeemer, Sanctifier and Author of endless glory. At this sight, the soul seizes with a strong hand the helm of hope, and confidently steers for heaven. So it was with Mother de Matel.

"Her confidence in God was so entire that, never having undertaken anything save by His orders, she never expected success but from Him. Never before had so many persons, and of the highest rank, interested themselves in the examination of a pious young woman. To submit herself without anxiety to these examinations, she had need of a confidence that love of the truth can alone inspire. This virtue was the more necessary to her, having to commence, without any great support, an Order which from the beginning, met with great obstacles; and, had she not greatly hoped in God, how could she have resisted the rude attacks of an envious cabal at Paris." *

The more she mistrusted her own resources, the more she felt capable of doing when trusting to God. Some time before the foundation of the convent at Paris, she wrote to M. de Cérisy: "I will not go to live at Paris except in a house bought or rented by myself, with the right to live in community with the Blessed Sacrament and the cloister; it would be leaving Paradise to enter Purgatory! I have not so much

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

zeal for suffering, unless, indeed, God shows it to be His holy will. In that case I would go down even to the gates of hell, hoping that one abyss would invoke another, and that torrents of sweetness would in their overflow overcome the deluge of bitterness that desolates these dark dungeons.

"I was in such indifference," writes Jeanne, "in the Easter week of 1633, "that all that was not God excited no feeling in me. Honors, contempt, praise, calumny, injuries and afflictions, all were alike to me, and I was affected by nothing, not even by the fury with which I was then persecuted. I could lose myself so happily in God that my soul was drowned, as it were, in that sea of goodness, so that it could not, I will not say love, but even think of aught but His pure love."

How could this feeling of her soul be other than deep and constant, when Our Lord took it on Himself to create it, with all the vigilance of a devoted teacher.

"One day, being elevated in spirit, I saw the heavens open, and in them a magnificent temple, with the ark of the covenant, the propitiatory, and the Cherubim covering it with their wings. This vision greatly rejoiced me. My divine Love presented me the key of David, telling me that with it I might open, when I wished, this magnificent temple, where was the ark of the covenant, before which I made my meditation.

"I understood that this precious key was loving confidence, through which, with wonderful ease, I would obtain of my Love the gifts and graces that His charity pressed Him to grant me gratuitously. I understood that this confidence was the pearl beyond price of the Gospel, to purchase which we should sell

everything ; that is, detach ourselves from everything created, so that God may take complacency and delight in us. It is the hidden manna of which John speaks, which has every variety of savor, imparts a sweet taste to everything, and makes us find sweetness and pleasure in God, who satisfies every desire of our heart. It is also the ' new name ' that God gives to the soul whom He loves, a name that is more glorious than that of son or daughter, for it is that of a spouse, and a well-beloved spouse, in whom He takes especial delight."

Let us still listen to this canticle of confidence and divine hope, as chanted by Mother de Matel : "My soul found herself strong as a wall, fortified by the omnipotence of the Beloved, Who was Himself, according to the expression of the Prophet Zachary, an advanced wall of fire to defend the approaches. She is continually nourished and protected by the two natures, which are like two breasts, to which her mouth is glued, where she finds a heavenly manna, far superior to that which fell in the desert for the Hebrews. These two natures are also as bulwarks to her, behind which she is safe from the attacks of her enemies."

If Jeanne's confidence in Our Lord was like that of a simple child, the goodness of Our Lord entered into every detail of her needs, with maternal tenderness, and dried her tears with affectionate solicitude. In 1636, the Vicar General of the Cardinal of Lyons, fearing to displease his Eminence, excluded the Chapel of the Incarnate Word from the list of those at which were to be held the devotion of the Forty Hours in behalf of the King. This solitary exception, and the consequent privation of graces for the house, deeply grieved Mother de Matel. She complained of it to Our Lord with many tears : "Remember,"—said He, "that men refused Me a lodging in Bethlehem," and then He

added, "he who, through fear of displeasing the Cardinal, did not name you for the Forty Hours, shall not, on that account, see the end of those prayers."— "I prayed for him," says Mother de Matel, "but I could not obtain a prolongation of his life." The prediction was realized, the Vicar General fell sick a few days afterwards, and died before the close of the prayers.

"One day, when, in great affliction, I was representing my infirmities to my divine Love, He appeared to me, bearing a heavy cross, and a crown of thorns on His head, but it was verdant. His dress was of the color of amaranth and faded purple, mixed; still it had a certain richness. His countenance was pale, but kind and grave; His eye, though dying, was very pleasing; it was that of a pensive and busy person. He was passing through a crowd of people, and coming to my help. My heart was filled with great confidence; gradually it lightened, and all the remainder of that day I could scarcely refrain from breaking forth."*— "One day, on awaking, I heard the words of my Spouse, Who invited me to do as did the Royal Prophet: Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." †

The attentions of Our Lord so won the confidence of His spouse that she feared sometimes that she was too familiar. "Once I was seized by a loving fear lest that my way of treating Our Lord was too bold, and culpable because of its seeming want of respect. I asked Him whether my freedom pleased Him; He answered me that such confidence could come only from Himself; that it was inspired by my love; that I could continue to appeal to Him for everything I wanted. My Beloved

* Autobiography.

† Ps., LIV., 23.

invited me to fly, like the royal eaglet, to the source of divine light, and to swoop like a great eagle upon its prey, on His sacred body, seizing it strongly in the Blessed Sacrament. This most divine Spouse showed me such love that He closed the interview by these words, that reveal the excess of his goodness: 'My daughter,' said He, 'have no difficulty in letting yourself be loved by Me, and cease to fear the familiarities that My love inspires thee to take with Me.'" *

And yet, God so permitting it, doubtless to test her confidence, and to preserve her humility, Jeanne always had a lively sense of her imperfections, accompanied by a profound sorrow, which sometimes overwhelmed, and, for a moment, overcame her. This Our Lord Himself noted in His interviews with His faithful servant. "I seem," said He, "to smite thee for thy faults, with the scourge of reproach, and the rod of sorrow." But, docile to the voice of her beloved Spouse, she consoled herself by looking on Him, hearing Him, and, especially, receiving Him, and confidence prevailed. Her correspondence with Father de Meaux places this feature of her spiritual physiognomy in an especial light, and enables us to be present at the touching spectacle of a loving soul, timid and gentle, ever ready to fear her weakness, and ever ready to be comforted by God, Who reserved to Himself the right of being her only support, and willed that she should know it.

* Autobiography.

CHAPTER VI.

HER LOVE OF GOD.

The elevation of the soul to God in love is one of the elements of contemplation. It was impossible to study Jeanne de Matel, in her divine communications, without speaking at the same time of her love of Him, but we desire to do so more fully.

In generous souls the love of God is in proportion to their knowledge of the beauty and goodness of the Beloved. As in the Trinity, the Word, the intelligence of the Father, has a priority of reason over the Holy Ghost, that lien of love who unites them, so, in the order of sanctity, God reveals Himself in order to be loved. And, if love increases with knowledge, who could more than Mother de Matel love Him, with her knowledge of His beauty and His love for man? Her writings are a never ending eulogy of the splendors of the Word, a perpetual chanting of His tenderness in our regard.

"God revealed to me, September 7th, 1644, in a high contemplation, that His desire to communicate Himself is so great that, did we not know that He is impassible, and that His infinite wisdom is infallible, we would deem His love to be a holy folly and an extreme passion.

"I understood that love leads at once to a division and to a union, because he who loves would share himself, and go out of himself, so as to communicate and unite with his object, make himself one with it, and, not being able to do as he desires, he would attach and bind himself to it."

Having contemplated the application of this law to God, in Whom the unity of essence comports with "the division of self" in the distinction of persons, she follows it in creation and the Incarnation.

"Without affecting His unity, God works outside Himself, and shares His perfections with creatures by an admirable division, whilst still remaining within Himself in all the immensity of His greatness and attributes. For this division is not made by parts being taken from the being of God, but by a participation of similar perfections which God communicates to creatures in giving them being. Besides, impelled by His love, He desires to collect, as it were, these divisions and shares of His goodness, and bind Himself to reasonable creatures, who are alone capable of the bond, drawing them to Himself and giving Himself to them. There is a continual attraction of God to creatures, and of creatures to God, through the medium of charity.

"The infinite love of God was not content with these divisions and bonds. He has invented a means whereby, though indivisible in Himself, He can put Himself in a state to suffer, in some sort, division and bonds. This He did in the Incarnation, through which, having become man, He has experienced in His soul the divisions of love, by the diversity of His affections and the emotions of His heart, and in His body by His wounds."

We should have to transcribe all that Mother de Matel has left us, did we aim at citing all that she has written on her love of the Savior; we shall select a portion only.

"O Lord, Thou hast been made a malediction for all, and particularly for me; I will not refuse contempt and sufferings, only praying not to be

abandoned. With Thee, divine Love, I can do all things. If Thou consolest me, if Thou wilt be my contempt, my sorrow, and my poverty, I shall be too happy in that state. He who has God has everything; he is too avaricious to whom God is not enough. My sufficiency is of Thee, and in Thee, my Love and my all. . . . .

"Dear Love, in Thy hands is my lot, in Thy eyes my resource, in Thy bosom my treasure; it is well with me wherever Thou art. . . . . Speak, Lord, for Thy servant is silent that she may listen to Thee in peace and quietness. She wishes to see but Jesus of Nazareth, her beautiful Spouse. Unite me to Thee, bind me with Thy bonds; I would be Thy captive. If I am dumb as a fish, enlace me in Thy meshes; in Thee I will find my food and my element, Who art the immense ocean where my spirit would wander and lose itself. Thou art my life, my gain is but in Thee.

"I wish to be able to say in truth that all that is not Thyself, my Love and my God, is and should be nothing to me. To suffer, or to die! To suffer for Thee, to die to myself, so as to live but in Thee, of Thee, for Thee and by Thee!

"O, Incarnate Word, our love and our stay, we should wish to be crucified head downwards, so as to have our eyes towards the heavens, like him who said to Thee, that, knowing all things, Thou couldst not be ignorant that he loved Thee with unspeakable love, such as Thou askedst for. . . .

"Waking or sleeping, I cannot forget Him Who is my sole love. His goodness so engages my affections that night to me is clear as the day, being able to say, with the spouse of the Canticles: I sleep, and my heart watches with such love that it cannot lose the presence of my divine Love."

In one of His communications to His servant, 1634, Our Lord applied to her the praises of the Groom to His spouse in the Holy Canticle: "I belong to Thee," answered Jeanne, in loving rapture, "and all those beauties Thou admirest are not mine, but Thine, and from Thee. . . . Come, my Beloved, take me out of this city of much trouble; for all that is not Thine is to me but refuse, and such I esteem it that I may gain Jesus Christ. Let us go forth into the wide field, the immense bosom of Thy Father. Let me be dead to all, that I may live hidden in Thee. Let us dwell in the hamlet of Thy Humanity, now in one wound, now in another. If Thou wishest me to serve my neighbor, pour into me the oil of Thy grace. I will be Thy Christopher, for Thou shalt not leave me, source of all grace; being within me, Thou shalt reconcile souls. Let us arise at early dawn, and go to the vineyard.

"First let us see whether our own is flourishing, and whether the flowers give hope of solid fruits, and if the pomegranates are blooming by Thy grace. That can be done; help me betimes, live in the midst of my heart by the sweetness of Thy divine countenance, be my aim and my end. Contemplating Thee, I shall be aided by the attraction of Thy divine presence. But, if Thou shouldst wish to be a little child, cling to my bosom in places retired from the common tumult. There I will feed Thee plentifully. The mandrakes have rendered their odors; may all that is in Heaven and on earth be Thine, my Beloved! As for myself, I have destined for Thee all things old and new.

"Who will give me, O Brother, O Incarnate Word, nourished at the bosom of the Virgin, to find myself alone with thee, freed from all care, far from the

presence of those who might distract me in the attention I owe Thee." *

We have often heard Mother de Matel styling herself a "little child." Her humility loved this title, but her simplicity loved it more. In fact, one may say that her effusions of love for Jesus have the caressing simplicity of a child, prattling on the knees of its mother.

Let us hear her as she clings in spirit to the Incarnate Word, on the feast of the Ascension, trying, as it were, to delay a little His flight into Heaven: "The door of Heaven must be opened to no one, but through Thee. The first Adam closed it, and Thou, the second Adam, wouldst and shouldst open it; Thou art its key. If I could, I would attach Thee to my cincture. . . . No, I should fear some thief, if for a moment I were to forget it. I would bear Thee around my neck. Thou shouldst be my priceless collar, my *Agnus Dei*. My devotion would attach itself to Thee without fear of self-love, since it would be holy. Bearing God in my bosom, I would be a copy of the Paternal bosom, holding in myself, and all for myself, the only child of my heart. This I may say, since Thou hast promised that they who do the will of Thy Father shall be to Thee brother, sister, mother. Thou canst not speak falsely. I take Thee at Thy word, which I will keep."

O, amiable familiarity, sublime simplicity! And here, in sudden contrast, are the ardors of a divine passion bursting forth: "Consent, then, divine Love, that I lodge Thee in my bosom, as an odoriferous bouquet, as a cordial liquor, or I will die unless Thou comfort me. Be my portion and my possession, as the God of my heart. I do not desire heaven, and I am

* Letters.

not happy on earth, but in Thee alone, my divine life."

Meditating one day on the mystery of the Incarnation, she asked the Archangel Gabriel to obtain for her of Our Lord the title of slave. The Archangel answered: "Offer thyself as a victim." This word moved her to tears. "It was told me that to offer one's self as a victim was more than to offer one's self as a slave. The difference between a victim and a slave consists in this, that the slave is bought only to serve the buyer, whereas the victim is to be put to death and entirely consumed at the will of him who takes or buys it, or to whom it has rendered itself." *

On the feast of St. Peter of Alexandria, 1636, she relates that, as she was thinking of the words spoken to him by the Savior: "Arius will rend My robe," "I admired the patience of this good and gentle Son of God. I had great compassion for the sufferings of this lover of men. Desirous of clothing Him in glory, I could have wished to be all brightness, to repair, if I could, the affront of the impious Arius." Then, addressing the Savior, her confidence assumes the tone of a sublime indignation against the profaner of the divinity of the Word. "This detestable Arius offended Thee grievously in wresting from Thee, so far as he could, the right of the only Son who reposes in the bosom of the Father. He gave the lie, in a manner, to the eagle of the Evangelists. What a blasphemy this heretic vomited forth, destroying the divine filiation, snatching this well-beloved Son from the bosom of the Father who engendered Him!"

We have seen in her life with what fervor she offered to the Incarnate Word her consecrations and her vows. Several formulas are preserved in the

* Autobiography.

houses of the Order, of which some are written in her blood. The following is one of the earliest in date, and of the most complete and touching: "My Creator, and my most merciful Savior, it is from Thee that I have received all that I have in nature and grace. My soul and my body are the work of Thy hands. If there be any virtue in me, it is the effect of Thy mercy, and of the grace that Thou didst merit for me by Thy death and Passion. I restore to Thee and give in duty and in love all that Thou hast given in mercy and charity. I abandon and cast myself wholly into the bosom of Thy divine Providence. I submit myself by an entire and irrevocable renunciation to Thy divine will. I renounce from this moment, with all the fullness of my free will, all my inclinations, judgment and will; all honors, riches, dignities and satisfactions, and, in general, all friendship of creatures, in so far as they might impede the execution of this vow.

"Behold me, Lord, deprived of all will, affection or desire; what wouldst Thou that I do? I want nothing, I wish nothing, I desire nothing but Thy most holy will; but to Thee I leave all will over me. If Thou wishest that all my life I should be in grief and ignominy, I wish it. My paradise, my inheritance, my pretension and my sovereign good is to do Thy will, so sovereignly amiable, which I adore and embrace with all the extent of my affection, in ignominy and in poverty, as in peace and prosperity; in interior and exterior sufferings, as in consolation and joy; in sickness and death, as in life and health.

"God of love and most amiable Savior, Thou shalt be eternally the sole object of all my affections and pretensions. And, as I am certain that I can not better find this will on earth than in the love and honor that we owe Thee in the most august, most

amiable and most adorable Eucharist, it is there that I again make myself Thy slave, and, as such, prostrate at the feet of Thy divine goodness and majesty, hidden in this ineffable Sacrament, I give and abandon myself once more; I offer, dedicate and consecrate myself, in duty and love, my very sweet Savior, in Thy Throne of love, in this sacred, holy and divine Host, which I adore with all the affection of my heart, with all my soul, all my strength, promising to live and die in this love, to labor with all my power that all the world may know, love and adore this wonderful mystery of Thy infinite love. I cast away all care for myself, and I desire in future that all my care, my thoughts, words and actions may be for love of this memorial of Thy sacred love.

"Most loving and most amiable Savior, grant me the grace to accomplish and to persevere inviolably in this love, vow and renunciation, which I attest, confirm and notify with my signature, in Thy presence, in that of the glorious Virgin Mary, of glorious St. Joseph and of my angel guardian.

"JEANNE DE MATEL."

Jeanne's life never falsified these words. "Her love of God," says an historian, "was always most tender and ardent. One could not speak to her of His goodness without exciting her, and when she spoke of it she moved the most insensible. All the time left her after her affairs, and even that which she should have devoted to sleep, she consecrated to a sublime prayer in which she satisfied her heart by torrents of loving tears; or, rather, this prayer was never interrupted, for in the greatest distraction of business one could see that she could hardly restrain the feelings of a heart always occupied with God.

"In the trials to which we saw Mother de Matel exposed after her last return to Paris, deprived of all

consolation from creatures, she was the more united to God. In her room she had only pictures that represented the different circumstances of the Passion of Our Lord. These kept her company in her abandonment; they engaged her eyes, while her heart was strengthened and consoled." *

"Is a natural inclination, in which there appears nothing wrong, an enemy so dangerous that one should, at the instant it reveals itself, take up arms to destroy it? Yes, without doubt, and when one does not do so, either he does not love Jesus Christ, or he has so feeble a love that it is on the point of expiring. This is the teaching of all the masters of the spiritual life, ancient and modern. An inclination of the kind distracts and occupies the mind, agitates the heart, and raises a rival to Jesus Christ." These reflections, drawn from a manuscript commentary of the works of Jeanne, were inspired by the account of a fierce struggle sustained by her heart to preserve for her Spouse a place contested by none. "I have been for several days in trouble on account of certain natural inclinations and tenderness that I felt for some persons. Not being able to suffer in my heart any affection but that for my divine Spouse, although I was not guilty in this affection, since it was not free, I did not cease to weep much, and to combat it with the help of the divine love, that I might love Him alone. This love was finally victorious, and He showed me a white carpet, spread upon the ground, all sown with flowers, and on which there was, besides, a rich crown of precious pearls. . . . . My divine Love told me that it was a reward for the violence on which I had at once resolved; that the carpet had been prepared for me, that I might walk as a queen or empress, wearing the crown offered to me."

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

The love of Jesus Christ was indeed king in the heart of Mother de Matel. He reigned as Master, and her thoughts and desires went beyond her actions. "My daughter," said Our Lord one day, to her, "formerly I asked thee to make me an offering of the praises given to thee by creatures, to make up for those which thou omittest to give Me; now I wish thee to present to Me all the affection that is had for thee." The love that Jeanne had for God flowed at once like a flood into this new channel opened to it. "O my Love," she exclaimed, "I wish that all infidels, heretics and other sinners would have an affection for me, that I might give it over to Thee." *

In all mysterious revelations made to the saints there is always something that belongs to themselves; namely, those personal and intimate favors which God intends should compensate the soul for the sacrifices it has to make in the path He has chosen for it, and to excite its confidence by a familiar pledge of His tenderness. In this, divine order has not changed. Even in our days, on the mountain of La Salette, and at the foot of the Pyrenees, after the supernatural communications confided to the children chosen by her, which were to be the theme of their apostolate, Mary makes them a personal communication and confides a secret to them.

Jeanne de Matel, so tried and opposed in her works, so abandoned in appearance, was the object of the tender caresses of the Incarnate Word; this we may well affirm since she says so herself. But these favors exciting in return her love, there arose an ineffable struggle worthy of heaven's regards.

Let us add some other instances to those we have already given, when studying her contemplative life.

* Letters to Father de Meaux.

On the feast of St. Catharine, 1636, after communion, she gives way to loving expressions and desires, interrupted by exclamations: "My God, and my King, since Thou deignest to call me Thy heart, I will call Thee my Love." And Our Lord told her that not only He would give her half of His kingdom, but Himself, in ineffable embraces.

Some days previous, the 6th of November, she had been taken into the intimacy of the Word: "I was admitted to the enjoyment of His divine love, that is, the Incarnate Word kindly and firmly conducted me into the temple of divine love in the bosom of His Father, of which He is the seal and the secret." There the Word seemed to inhabit the house of the Archer. She contemplated the mysterious flight of arrows, discharged by the Incarnate Love at the hearts of the Saints, and which give them so much joy. She, too, wishes to be wounded, and in her transport she cries out to the divine Archer, in ecstatic ardor: "Love, since the bow is bent I am ready to receive the dart."

"My divine Love told me that, if formerly He had taken pleasure in the heart of St. Gertrude, now He took it in mine, in which He had established His dwelling, because my love drew Him; and that, if I was not, like Magdalen, several times a day lifted up, body and soul, into Heaven, I was, at least, in spirit, and higher from day to day." *

Once, on a feast of the Transfiguration, after having received Communion, she went into an ecstasy, and, looking on the transfigured Savior, she heard these words: "My daughter, Peter asked only three tabernacles, I have five." She had offered up her Communion for herself and four other persons. She desired to place herself in the wound of His left Foot, as in a

* Autobiography.

tabernacle. He said: "My daughter, I have taken thy heart; Mine belongs to thee by My love."

"My Spouse, all love exhorted me," she writes, "to say in holy confidence: My God, my sole desire is that Thy law should be graven in the depths of my heart. I offered myself to keep this law already written in my heart, by the strength of my love alone. I presented my heart and my bosom, that my Beloved might impose Himself there as a law of love. I felt that He rooted Himself there as a standard of love, and, my heart being sensibly wounded, I wished to support myself that I might more firmly bear the divine operation; but a weakness wholly overcame me. All the Community, then in choir, perceived it and were much troubled, thinking me dead. My daughters carried me off to bed, and tried to relieve my illness, not knowing the extreme delight which I was then receiving.*—Thou didst present me a cross, like in form to that of St. Andrew; A diamond nail strongly and richly fastened together the two pieces of wood that composed it. Thou madest me understand that the opposition of men rendered me firmly and gloriously united to Thee, but in a union to be compared to the diamond."

One day, when she had been subjected to bitter grief by an unjust interpretation of her words, Our Lord showed her an altar, before which lay a multitude of persons who had been decapitated; by an invisible power their heads were restored to place, and their whole persons, far from exhibiting any trace of their execution, were resplendent with glory: "My daughter," said Jesus, "hast thou the courage to be beheaded for me?"—"Inspired by the spirit Thou gavest to Thy martyrs," continues Jeanne, "I said to

* Letters to Father Jacquinot.

Thee: I wish I could have the happy lot to be beheaded for Thee, O, most amiable Incarnate Word." —" Daughter, since thou wouldst give thy head for Me, I tell thee that there are persons who have beheaded thee, not physically, but morally, by esteeming thy visions to be folly; but I will show that my folly is wiser than the wisdom of the world. I rank thee with the martyrs who have given their heads and lives for Me." *

A martyr! Jeanne would have wished to be one in reality. When, in the course of her contemplations, ordered according to the liturgical cycle of the mysteries and the saints, she found herself in the presence of those who have joined to the lily of virginity the palm of martyrdom, it is seldom that she is not transported by an ardent desire to be associated in the bloody testimony of their love. On the feast of St. Agatha and St. Dorothy, for instance: "Those virgins," she says, "clad in white and red, appeared to me very lovable, attracting me to them, to praise Thee with their canticle, following Thee everywhere, their milky way, after the Virgin, Thy Mother. I desired to be of their number, and, like them, to shed my blood, since Our Spouse is white and red." *

Again she says: "Happy should I be were I made worthy to die for the Incarnate Word, whom love made the Word Incarnate. Oh, were that grace and honor mine, to shed the last drop of my blood in testimony of the Divine Word, how joyous would be my love."

Not being able to witness with her blood, her love of God exhibited itself so frequently by copious floods of tears during her prayer, that, in the last years of her life, her sight was seriously weakened. "I can

* Autobiography.

not express my mortification in being obliged, through obedience, to repress my tears, so as not to lose my eyesight, as they feared would be the case, unless I diminished the flow. Unable to read or write, I dared not even pray with fervor, because I found that, when once the flame was kindled by the Holy Spirit in my soul, the water flowed copiously : *Flabit spiritus ejus et fluent aqua.*" *

Elsewhere we have spoken of the mystic ardors by which this flame of the Holy Spirit exhibited itself interiorly. Here we shall cite only this avowal : "The fire Thou didst enkindle in my bosom was so ardent that it became a furnace always heated. My blood was all burned up, according to the physicians."

The Spirit of God had then realized in Mother de Matel the mysterious effects of His presence. He was a flame, a source of living water, love : *Fous vivus, ignis, charitas.*

* Ps., CXLVII, 18 : "His wind shall blow, and the waters shall run."

CHAPTER VII.

HER CHARITY TOWARDS HER NEIGHBOR.

"The second commandment," says Our Lord, "is like unto the first: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." In Jeanne de Matel, as in all the saints, the love of God begot a charity without limit for the neighbor.

The sacrifice of temporal goods is that which costs less to sincere love. Jeanne was so liberal in her alms-giving that her friends were sometimes made uneasy. She did not share their fears, and preferred to owe to Providence rather than to more or less prudent industries, the resources of which she disposed. One day she learned that a young lady of her acquaintance was trying to interest in her favor some persons of distinction; fearing that, unless she were assisted, she would not be able to maintain her daughters and support the convent. Jeanne was then at Paris. She answered to those who spoke to her on the subject: "I did not ask the good young lady to render me that service. I do not put my confidence in men, but in the Providence of the Incarnate Word, Who never forsakes me." "In that," says the author whom we quote, "she was very different from some persons who, in order to do charity, overwhelm the most charitable with their solicitations."

The historians of Mother de Matel relate an instance of her liberality and disinterestedness that is almost heroic. It was shortly before the Community of Lyons was erected into a convent. Jeanne's means being nearly exhausted by her previous foundations

and the expenses occasioned by the two sieges and the famine of Paris, she had need to manage her resources. She learned that at Roanne there was a man abandoned by his family, all whose goods had been seized for debt, and were going to be sold. She at once felt herself inspired to come to his aid, had the act of confiscation suspended, paid the debt of the prisoner, 5665 livres, and restored him to liberty. This alms, given on the feast of St. Michael, was so pleasing to God that He loaded Jeanne with His favors, called her His "little liberator," and invited her to participate in the happiness and glory of His angels.

During the war at Paris, 1649, the misery was frightful. "Mother de Matel gave signal proofs of her zeal and charity. Desirous of procuring peace to the unfortunate city, she sought it of Our Lord with tears and vigorous mortifications. She engaged Dom Jacques, Procurator of the Cistercians, to compose a book containing different prayers asking peace of the Incarnate Word through the intercession of His august Mother. She had images of the Blessed Virgin struck off, below which was a prayer asking the cessation of the troubles. In this and in the printing of the books she expended as much as 500 livres." *

Not content with thus exercising charity towards the people in general, she visited daily the houses of the bashful poor, and distributed to each what was requisite to secure them from hunger, and from the cold, which that winter was very severe.

But, to be more intimately initiated in her deeds of charity, we must read what remains to us of her correspondence. There we find her attentive to all the needs of those with whom she is acquainted, or

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

from whom she receives benefits, and, of her own accord, recommending them to her Spouse. There is nothing of grave interest going on about her, or in the church, which she does not adopt and favor by her zeal.

She was so good-natured that in certain respects she had to guard against it as a danger. Some lines we have from her pen, which clearly reveal this disposition of her heart.

"Adorable Providence, how wise Thou art in Thy ways. If I had followed my own good will in Paris, I would have mixed myself up in many pious intrigues; my frankness would not have permitted me to dismiss those who came to me for counsel as much from curiosity as from piety. They would have persuaded me to pray to Thee for affairs that had rather the appearance than the substance of devotion. They would have besieged me hadst Thou given or permitted the least light to their darkness; that which would have begun in a charitable intention might have ended in self-interest. I would not have liked to displease any one, thinking to do all for Thee and to gain all for Thee; my natural inclination to satisfy all those who seem desirous of confiding in me would have overwhelmed me with the affairs of others." Jeanne intended in these words to confess a weakness, but she rather reveals the goodness of her heart.

Where Jeanne's charity is more strikingly visible is in the indulgence which she grants to those who wished to do her wrong, or impede her work. On her return to Paris, she was, as we have said, the butt of persecution for two persons who, in their foolish pretensions, aspired to direct the Congregation. Deceived in their calculations, they carried their

anger to that extent that they endeavored to destroy the house by depriving it of its religious and boarders. Jeanne does not even name them. After a brief mention of the fact, she adds: "My dear Love, as I have no bitterness in my heart for those who have made me suffer, I do not wish my pen to specify and detail the evils they would have caused me." *

This, too, is the way in which she judges the action of a Vicar General, who had shown himself much opposed to the establishment of the Order: "I have no animosity against him, knowing that men abound in their own sense, and can resist one design or establishment, and favor another, without displeasure to Him Who inspires both, not recognizing His inspiration, except in the one which they prefer and protect. Angels and saints have opposed each other in all holiness, not knowing the decree of the Sovereign whilst resisting it." *

In this gentleness can we fail to recognize a soul solidly fixed in God, and soaring above human passions and selfish calculations?

Always discreet and attentive to conceal the names of those who made her suffer when she could hope to keep them secret, Jeanne has sometimes allowed, like sobs, the echoes of her grief to escape her, caused by unfaithfulness to God, or by ingratitude towards herself. But the cry of affliction is always quickly followed by the appeal for forgiveness: "My very dear Love, Thou didst permit a note to be brought to me, which troubled me, and changed my joy to sorrow, because I saw their inclinations, which I could not approve: they were from the spirit of flesh and blood. . . . I recognized ingratitude, which I pardon with all my heart, from persons whom Thou didst give to my

* Autobiography.

bosom. I have not had, and have not now, for them, any but peaceful thoughts, which double the flame of my charity for them ; I desire for them a peace and joy that may surpass all things." *

"Dear Love," she says in her life, "St. Paul, the Apostle, teaches us that we must heap hot coals on the head of our enemy, by returning good for the evil that he intended us. I wish to follow his advice." And she did so with an ardor that was truly edifying. Her intercourse with Heaven often served to turn aside from her persecutors true evil, the wrath of God: "Weeping before Thee for the faults that a certain person committed against Thee, Thou didst show me a bow of iron, four digits in breadth ; the arrow fixed to the bow was of gold, the point being very sharp and stained with blood. I understood that Thou didst wait patiently, not discharging the arrow, but holding it. On two other occasions I saw the lightning, which Thou seemedst to dart against the one who made me suffer. I offered to receive it myself. This Thou wouldst not permit, but, skillfully turning it aside, I saw it fall in the water." *

Jeanne was kind to her persecutors, because what she especially loved in her neighbor was his soul. By the spirit of her Order, by her mission, as we have said, she had the vocation of the Apostolate. Thus, anxiety for the salvation of souls always attended her, and God publicly associated Himself thereunto. He nearly always accompanied the gift that was personal to herself with one that was useful to her neighbor.

He had just summoned her in spirit to the nuptials of the Lamb, and chosen her for spouse, promising her a numerous generation of spiritual daughters. He continues to address her : "He told

* Autobiography.

me that my hair should be, like the purple of the King, stained in the conduits, because I was sprinkled by the flowing blood of the Savior, receiving Him every day in Communion, and through the absolution; that he made my heart a canal, and my mouth a scarlet ribbon, colored by the Precious Blood, as much for his pleasure as for my sanctification, and to pour forth through me, as by a channel, His liberality towards souls purchased by this Precious Blood.

"As St. Theresa was a channel of grace for her Order and for many souls, His goodness had chosen me to distribute his wonderful favors."

A little later: "He told me that I was the daughter of His glory. He would not give it to another. The time would come when the favors He granted to me should be as strong darts to wound hearts with His divine love. I remembered what He had said twenty years previously, that I should be His standard bearer, and that, on seeing me carry His banner, many should be enlightened, and should combat for His glory."

Elsewhere she says: "Thou didst show me a man-of-war, fully equipped, in which they raised two standards; by the help of a supernatural wind it navigated the sea without my being able to see any pilot who governed it. I understood that Thy Invisible Spirit directed it, and I heard the words: *Navis institoris de longe portans panem suum.** My daughter, thou art this ship, equipped by My grace, armed with My love, and guided by the Spirit who governs My Church. I have set in thee two standards, the love of God, Who loves thee, and the love of thy neighbor." †

* Prov., XXXI., 14., "She is like the merchant's ship, she bringeth her bread from afar."

† Autobiography.

And hence what sorrow on seeing the sufferings of souls! Meditating on the Passion of the Lord before Caiphas, and the words of his servant: Prophesy who struck thee; "she understood that sinners do this and more. For, it was said to her, priests are My lieutenants, representing Me in the confessional, like a good physician who wishes the wound made known to him that he may cure it; and sinners do the contrary. They are covered by so many, and, having struck Me in them, they seem to challenge Me to prophesy their guilt! Then she felt herself struck with grief, melted to tears of compassion, on seeing the sick conceal themselves, and mock the Sovereign Physician." *

We have often drawn attention to the happy influence exercised by Mother de Matel on those who came in contact with her. Our readers have not forgotten the high degree of sanctity to which, animated by her burning words, was elevated M. de Belly at Avignon, and M. de la Piardiere at Paris. But we must insist a little more on this striking character in her life, and relate a number of analogous facts preserved by her first historians.

"M. de Priezac, Counsellor of State, and one of the brightest geniuses of his time, made great progress in holiness under the guidance of Mother de Matel. He was much enamored of a young lady who destined herself to the Order of the Incarnate Word, and he wished to espouse her. This thought, which he had not originated, which he even withstood, troubled him a long time; he made it known to the foundress. She did not answer; but, putting herself in prayer, she earnestly begged Our Lord to remove from the heart of her friend a sentiment very natural in itself

* Letters to Father Jacquinot.

and very innocent, and to substitute therefor a pure affection for the Queen of Virgins. M. de Priezac was instantly delivered from the thought that troubled him, and his devotion for Mary declared itself so strongly that he resolved to compose a book on the privileges of the Mother of God. He sent its pages to Mother de Matel, begging her to correct them before they were put in press ; and, after the work was printed, he publicly made known that it was owing to the counsels of that incomparable mother, for so he always called her." *

This work of M. de Priezac, "On Twenty-four Privileges of the Mother of God," received, in two letters that have come down to us, the sincerest eulogy of Mother de Matel. The author having paid her the compliment of a copy, she said : "It is a present that is worth a treasure, and which we cannot sufficiently esteem but by declaring that it is full of evangelical pearls which we should sell all to purchase. The skill is worthy of the matter ; the useful and the pleasing are admirably united ; devotion and eloquence, so seldom joined together, are here in unison, and there is nothing, even to the expressions and the least words, that is not bright and striking. Because your mind is filled with ideas of the true and perfect beauty of Our Savior, you have so filled your book with beauties that it is impossible not to love it."

"M. de Rossignol, Counsellor of Accounts, came regularly to open his conscience to Mother de Matel ; she inspired him particularly with a tender devotion for the mystery of the Incarnation, and the august Sacrament of the Altar. He sometimes passed several hours at the feet of the Holy Victim, lost in

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

adoration, and to the end of his life he was a finished model of all Christian virtues."

More remarkable than all these was the case of a protestant named Dulaurier, a painter by profession, who, having had occasion sometimes to see Mother de Matel, expressed his desire to paint her portrait, because, as he said, her features were of such regular beauty, and that he had never seen so faultless a countenance. The difficulty was to gain her consent, and no one ventured to propose it. One sister, more courageous than the rest, spoke of it to her. At first she exclaimed against it, and would not hear of it. But the sister, without being disconcerted, after having exposed her reasons, added: "How do you know, Mother, but this is the means by which the Incarnate Word designs to effect the conversion of this heretic, since you will thus have an opportunity of reasoning with him, as the Son of God had with the Samaritan woman?"

"Mother de Matel felt all the value and weight of such a happy hope. She recollected herself for a moment, and then said that the painter might come when he would. Dulaurier, apprised of her consent, lost no time in appearing in the parlor. Whilst working, he perceived that Mother de Matel's countenance changed from time to time, so that he could not fix the resemblance. This he mentioned, saying: 'Mother, I fear I shall not succeed; it seems to me that there is something extraordinary going on in your soul.' From this she took occasion to open a controversy, in which she proved so plainly the falsity of his religion that he was obliged to avow that all those who followed it were in error. 'Pray to the Lord, my good Mother,' he added, 'that He may grant me the grace to carry out the resolution I have formed of forsaking it to embrace the true religion.' Mother de Matel promised

all that he asked, and exhorted him to be faithful to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, Who had already touched his heart.

"Some days afterwards, Dulaurier returned to finish his work. Mother de Matel urged him once more: 'Since you now know the truth, you must embrace it, and prepare at once to abjure your heresy.' He answered that it could not be so quickly done; that he had a law suit on hand, which was on the point of being decided, and that his abjuration should at once follow. 'Believe me,' she replied, 'the Holy Ghost is an enemy of all delay; you may die. Do not put off a work on which depends your eternal salvation.' He agreed to all that she said, but retired, without concluding, anything to await the end of his suit.

"The next day he gained his process. His joy was extreme; hurrying back to his lodgings to announce the news to his wife, he said: 'The suit is gained,' and fell dead at her feet. When Mother de Matel heard what had happened, she at once called on the poor widow, who was prostrated by grief, and tried to console her. She informed her of what had passed between them on the preceding day, and of the good disposition of her husband to embrace the Catholic faith. She succeeded so well that the widow, her daughter, and her brother-in-law were converted; three days later they publicly abjured their errors and entered the true fold of the Church, in which they had the happiness to die." *

Zeal for souls does not restrict itself to seeking and using means to save them. He who burns with this ardor, like the Apostle, would be anathema for the sake of his brethren; or, like a great saint, he would remain eternally prostrate at the gates of hell, if he

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

could thus keep that abyss closed to sinners. Jeanne belonged to the heroic family of those who entertain this ardor for souls. "On the festival of the fervent Apostle of the Indies, St. Francis Xavier, my soul, humbled at sight of its sins, was, by a sentiment of justice, impelled and pressed to make Thee honorable reparation, not only for myself in particular, but for all sinners. I offered, through a zeal that I could not explain, to suffer punishment for all, even the flames of hell, so as to satisfy the Divine Majesty, offended by all, provided I should not be, in Thy indignation, deprived of Thy grace, nor of loving Thee perfectly, and of adoring Thee in spirit and truth."

The love of the priesthood, and the desire of holiness, are met with on every page of the life of Mother de Matel. In her every thanksgiving, in her prayers on all occasions, she recommends priests to the Savior, and He witnesses how pleased He is with this spiritual intention and patronage. He makes her His deputy to them, His apostle: "Daughter, say to my priests, if in their day, which is brief, they try to please Me, in Mine, which is eternal, I will please them."— "Daughter, My grace being in thee, I am pleased that thou shouldst pray for My priests; for this sweet liquor distilling into them, thy words, which are the messengers of My grace, are a gentle effusion on their heads, and by this oil they are enlightened and rejoiced. They are consecrated anew on coming to offer My sacrifice." *

What must we say concerning Jeanne's maternal affection for her daughters? What solicitude for their spiritual and temporal interests! We have seen her, during the war, an indefatigable provider for the lambs of her flock, and, in her journeys, pursued by anxiety

* Letters to Father Jacquinot.

for their wants. Her vigils, her fatigue, her prayers are all devoted to them; next to Jesus and the Church, they are the objects of her tireless love. No trouble reaches them without wounding her, no suffering of theirs escapes her. She gains and governs them "with the honey of a charitable and motherly treatment, that binds them more strongly than the vows of religious." *.

"Every time that I have to leave one of my convents, I suffer greatly on account of my union of heart with my daughters." † She serves them with her hands in their houses, and personally sees to the preparation of their meals. To form them to the virtues of their state, and to make them faithful to their vocation, she presses, she exhorts them. Coming down from the heights of contemplation, she spells with them the primers of the divine science, and makes herself all to all, that she may gain all to Christ. And, if one shows herself ungrateful or forgetful of her benefits, if her old age is filled with bitterness, she suffers without accusation, without complaint. Her love neither tires, nor is troubled, nor draws back. She is a Mother.

We reproduce the following letter, written to the Sisters of Lyons to wish them a happy new year. We find in those maternal accents that sentiment of predilection that drew her more tenderly to the convent of that city, and which so frequently betrays itself in her writings:

"My Very Dear Daughters:

"May the Father of Mercies, and the God of all consolation, bless you all. This is my cordial and affectionate salutation.

* Letter to M de Nesmes.

†Letters to Sister Theresa of Calvary.

"It would be necessary to be without the name and the bowels of a mother to forget those whom the divine goodness has made me engender. The more removed they are in body, the more present they seem to be in spirit by the continual solicitude of a mother's heart, and by a singular affection. Rebecca had peace in herself, having to be the mother of two peoples whom she bore within her; the younger of her sons was to be the blessed of the Lord. The Congregation of Lyons is to be the youngest in the religious birth. I am drawn to it with a love that is stronger than death. The holy mountain * is my beloved Zion and my dear Jerusalem. If I saw it abandoned, I would lament as the sorrowing prophet. Take care lest indevotion, the infidelity which we commit, should cause the guardian of Israel to retire. Renew your fervor in this beginning of a new year." . . . .

How many were not her recommendations, her encouragements to piety, fervor, renunciation and love, addressed to her spiritual family! It is the burthen of all her correspondence. From the care of souls she passes easily and naturally to that of health, and there, too, how ingenious and touching she is! "My dear daughter," she writes to Mother de Belly, I "recommend the care of your health; do not fatigue yourself more than you can help. You know how many tears I have shed to procure it for you. Let your service be reasonable; it is the advice of the Apostle." She sends her for a time Sister Francis Gravier: "When she goes out on commissions, which she undertakes for the glory of God, and to prove to me a fidelity that I do not doubt, I beg you not to let her leave the house without a broth, or something that may strengthen her."

* Gourgillon.

When she would hear of the sickness or death of one of her daughters, Jeanne compared her grief to that of Rachel; and, indeed, she felt all its anguish and desolation. "I confess," she writes to Mother Mary Margaret on one of these occasions, "that the goodness and wisdom of the Lord spare me by taking my daughters away when I am not there to witness it. I am like Agar for her Ishmael, I cannot bear to see my daughters die. I do not give this as a mark of perfection, but one of strong feeling or desolation, which you should not imitate. I would not have the strength to bear so many deaths; the sight would kill me." Her affliction was so great that God would sometimes intervene, in a sensible manner, to console her. It would happen that, in convents at a distance, when death had chosen new victims, they would delay communicating the news, knowing how much she would feel it. But it became too evident that Jeanne was always supernaturally warned of what they wished to conceal from her: "Our Community knows that they always come to bid me good-bye in one place or another, by some certain sign, when I have not had the prayers said which are of obligation in all convents; and this happens when there is a delay in announcing to me their death." *

But the greatest mark of affection given by Jeanne to her Order and its daughters, we hesitate not to say, was the one alluded to in the following lines written to Mother Margaret, after the first civil war of Paris: "If I had taken the veil, the convent at Paris would have been destroyed, as has happened to eight other houses in the last four years; the house of Lyons would have been sold, and Grenoble would have covered you and me with confusion, if, indeed, we love the Incarnate Word."

* Autobiography.

"It is a humiliation for me to be deprived of a happiness which I have procured for yourselves; but, for my daughters, it is a glory to have had a mother who suffers more than she did who desired her son to reign, though it cost her her life. I would give ten thousand lives, if I had them, for my daughters' sake."

The affection she entertained for young girls, and her zeal for Christian education, are touchingly shown in the first project of her Constitutions, 1625.

In addition to the solemn vows of religion, they will take two others: The first one of perpetual cloister. . . . The second, never to give their vote for a proposition to abolish teaching in the Order; for teaching is the wool and the fleece they should furnish"—as daughters of the Lamb Jesus—"and one that will not fail to receive the dew of heavenly grace. The Holy Ghost will weave thereon the golden words of Jesus, more precious than gold and topazes; He will imprint His immaculate law in hearts, He will convert souls to God, He will perfectly plant the faith, and form these young seculars to all sorts of virtues." It was for the Sisters of the Incarnate Word a beautiful programme, a touching promise, a holy appeal.

Mother de Matel returns to the consideration of this vocation with special grace, and wonderful examples: "Our Spouse is not content with His spouse placing Him on her bosom for her special salvation, but on her arms, bearing little children to salvation, educating them by good example and sound doctrine, instructing and encouraging them; for the religious of this Order should all be flaming lamps, in imitation of St. John the Baptist, the precursor of the Lamb.

"One should be queen of queens, even as the Spouse is called King of Kings, conquering and ruling one's

self, to rule others afterwards by angelic modesty; then, in the presence of that rising sun, walking in the light, always upright, calling the little birds, their daughters, to the great field of Christian doctrine, and to all kinds of virtue." *

The history of Mother de Matel has preserved for us a beautiful proof of the sympathy which she had excited in the hearts of the children confided to her care. In the early days of their residence at Lyons, when the plague was desolating the city, the Sisters insisted on their foundress leaving the place. One of the arguments employed to convince her shows how good she was, and how beloved: "If you should be attacked, what will our pupils do? Say, will it be possible to prevent them from visiting you, whom they so tenderly love?" Such a fear was an eloquent panegyric on Mother de Matel.

The same feeling is revealed in a touching avowal made by Jeanne. During the siege of Paris, when her daughters were obliged to leave their house, one of her greatest troubles, among the many that beset her, was to see herself for a time separated from her pupils: "One thing that mortified me was to see four of our boarders withdrawn by their parents, two of whom were deprived of the little habit. And, as Thy justice has always permitted my heart to be afflicted when my pupils were taken away, I was much grieved because of my tenderness and their gratitude." † If death took one away from her, she was as much affected as though she had lost one of her own daughters. Thus it was that she was weeping in the Dominican church of St. Thomas for one of her pupils, when the Seraphim came to console her for the death of Sister Catharine of

* First project of the Constitutions.

† Autobiography.

Jesus, de Richardon, who expired at Avignon on Holy Thursday, 1649.

In the service of these young children she did not hesitate to jeopardize her own health: "M. Seguin," she writes to M. de Cérisy, then delegated Superior of the Convent of Paris,—"came to see me, when I was ill with a great oppression on my chest that scarcely allowed me to breathe, a palpitation of the heart, and a great swelling of the limbs. These infirmities were occasioned, perhaps, by my sins, and by sitting up for ten days with the little de Fruge, who had a continual fever, one that they thought was dangerous for the others. I had her brought to me and laid by my side, that I might take more care of her."

In the case of another sick child of six years, for two months eaten up by the small pox, with a series of sores on her throat, shoulder, arms and legs, Jeanne wrote from Lyons to Mother Nallard, Superioress of the Convent of Paris: "The doctors wished to write to her father that they praised God for having preserved his child in an illness which few could have borne. This is the consolation they give me in so much suffering. They are all astonished that I am not in bed after so many tears, vigils and anxieties."

She had brought to Lyons a little daughter of M. de la Piardiere: "Marie is very well, having neither cold nor sore eyes. I, myself, warm her feet and care for her as for the pupil of my eye." How beautiful it is to see this venerable woman, sixty years of age, initiated in the great mysteries of God, in constant communication with heaven, entering with the greatest simplicity into all the details of a mother's solicitude for little children, of whom she writes elsewhere: "The little boarders are they who are most fit to be called by that Savior who said: 'Suffer little children to come unto Me.'"

To these beautiful examples Jeanne added her counsels: "Let us remember, for our great consolation, that the youth confided to us is that part of His flock which the Incarnate Word most tenderly cherished, and which He wished to have specially led unto Him. This, my dear Sisters, is the honorable commission entrusted to us. Can we fail to bring to it all the exactness of which we are capable, or regard it as a burthen from which every one would wish to be freed?"

Piously anxious to ensure the salvation, and, on occasion, the vocation of young persons destined to grow up in the houses of the Incarnate Word, Mother de Matel multiplied her counsels to her daughters, that their lives should be a constant lesson of edification, and an appeal to virtue: "Your example alone, more efficacious than words, will teach the importance and practice of modesty; and, what is still more advantageous, it will inspire its taste. This instruction by example is the more necessary because we are always before the eyes of these young ladies, or of the servants whom we instruct, and we are thus always exposed to their criticism. It is also the most efficacious means of imparting a love of religion, and in this way to wrest from the world slaves whom the devil already looked upon as his prey. Oh, how many have lost their vocation to that holy state, or to whom God has not been able to make Himself heard, because they have passed their youth in houses in which the rule was not strictly observed, and the maxims of the world were too much heeded and followed. I hope that the Incarnate Word, to whose glory we are consecrated, and whose zeal for souls we should reproduce, will preserve us from such prevarication, and that, if the young persons who are entrusted to us are not incited by our example to a total divorce from the

world, they may at least learn to live in the world without loving it, and conceive for its maxims that horror which all Christians should entertain."

It is not seldom that the world calumniates the sacrifice which a young girl makes of family happiness, and the exchange which she makes of its duties for others still more holy, and reproaches the religious state with drying up the source of filial affection, and withering the heart. As though grace did not always elevate and sanctify all that it comes in contact with! As though the masters of the spiritual life did not teach that in religion we must love those more whom we loved in the world, and love no one the less; that religion transforms affection, but does not suppress it! As though they did not point out to souls consecrated to a religious life, as examples of tenderness towards those whom they have left, the love which the blessed have for their brethren on earth, and that which Jesus Christ had for His disciples after the resurrection. Let them listen to the holy solicitude which the cloister confides to heaven, the evidences of supernatural love to which it gives expression. What more conclusive on this point than the following letter of Mother de Matel to her sister, Madame de Grimeau:

"Madame, My Dear and Only Sister:

"May He, Who gave us one blood, reunite us in one glory.

"My heart, that was oppressed in bidding you farewell, did not permit my mouth to express my feelings on so sudden a parting. Not having been able to see enough of you after a separation of nearly seventeen years, I have no words to describe the sorrow of that privation, which would cause me great confusion before God, did He not permit me to love you as my beloved sister, whose sufferings I feel more than my

own. If love makes the soul dwell rather there where her affection is than in the body which she animates and informs, then I live more in you than in myself. This last sight of you, transitory as it was, has lit in my soul a flame that rivers could not extinguish. I experience the truth of that saying of David, that it is a good thing when nature and grace combine to institute a perfect love, not between two brothers, but between two sisters. I did great violence to myself in depriving myself so soon of those things at Roanne which I prize next to the divine. It was for God that I hastened my departure, and, seventeen years ago, left the house of my father, and tore myself from the bosom of so good and holy a mother, whom may His goodness have received to glory. Dear sister, let us imitate her virtues and hope to see her in heaven. If divine Providence allows us once more to meet in this life, you will find that an elder loves her younger sister as Joseph loved Benjamin." *

Mother de Matel took care not to forget, in her charity, the holy souls in purgatory ; she gave them a large part in her prayers, as we have seen on the occasion of the death of her mother, her friends and her daughters. Once, on the feast of All-Souls, her confessor recommended her to do holy violence with Our Lord in their behalf. "Ah, Father," said she, "that I will." She went to Communion. She was so inflamed before the Mass began that she could not pronounce the words of the penance imposed upon her. Burning with ardor, she presented herself at the holy table. Having received Our Lord, she said to Him : "Thou shalt not enter my heart until Thou hast delivered the souls in purgatory, who will go to praise Thee, since me Thou leavest still in this world." Then, turning to the angel guardians, who seemed to

* Letters (August 12th, 1643).

her to be desiring the freedom of the souls they loved: "Oh," said she, "present to the Father this, His Son, Whom I have just received, and tell Him that I go their security." She heard then: "The nuptials were celebrated yesterday; the first table was for the Church triumphant, the second for the Church militant, the rest is for the Church suffering. There are as many viands for them as for the others." She pressed the Savior yet more, saying: "Take me off the book of life, so let me suffer for them." It seemed that He said to her as to St. Catharine, Thou shalt have much to suffer. And so she wished it to be. *

God did not hesitate to reward her charity for the dead by supernatural manifestations of His tenderness. "On the 28th of November, 1636," as she relates, "I had been praying for a woman who had died that morning. Shortly after, I saw, being elevated in spirit, an angel guarding a dead body with heavenly care. I then saw a woman as though suspended, her hair all floating; she was crowned." The reflections with which she accompanies the recital of this vision are touching, and show her goodness of heart for the poor and lowly. "This vision made me understand that my prayer had been answered, and that the woman was at peace. Her poverty was changed into riches, her contempt to honor, her sufferings to happiness, her lowliness to greatness, since she wore a crown. These wonders show that God is no accepter of persons, and that the poor who consent to poverty by submitting to it can look forward to beatitude, and that they will be kings for all eternity."

How good God must be Who is the author of so much goodness and love in the saints!"

* Letters to Father Jacquinot.

CHAPTER VIII.

HER PIETY.

The exercise of charity did not diminish in Jeanne the love of prayer. During her sojourn in the Convent of Paris, all her time not employed in the salvation of her neighbor, or in the service of the house, was spent at the foot of the altar; to indemnify her for the distraction caused by so many visits, she would prolong her prayer until midnight, which did not prevent her from rising at four o'clock in the morning. In these happy moments, profiting by the silence of creatures, she would give herself up to the transports of her fervor; she would console herself with her divine Master for all the disquietude caused to her by the false zeal and pharisaical scandal of those who were astonished at her conduct." *

There were times when, by order of her physicians, Jeanne had to make efforts to abstain from prayer; her weakened sight did not permit, either, that she should occupy herself in pious reading. "I would then," says she, "engage in vocal prayer, as Thou knowest that I can do, saying my Rosary several times, day and night, walking to and fro in my room, since I could not stand the open air. Often I would visit Thee in Thy abode of Love, Thy sacred and most beloved Eucharist, standing or sitting down; my knee being affected for a long time, I could not kneel." †

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

† Autobiography.

Without losing in the slightest degree her respect for the house of God, she had accustomed herself to believe that she was a servant in the house of a master, long served and devotedly loved. From this followed, as a consequence, great familiarity, in which is revealed a faith, which, though strange in appearance, was deeply rooted. Speaking of the period to which we have just referred, she says: "Thy loving charity permitting me to walk about, I do so in the church when it is closed, or else in the choir, with the intention of doing as is usual in processions; I invite all the angels and saints to join me, and to offer my prayers to Thy adorable Majesty, uniting my intention to theirs in conformity to Thine. If I pray standing, I see Thee as did St. Stephen; if sitting down, I consider Thee seated at the right hand of Thy Father, or as at the supper; if I am prostrate, I regard Thee at the feet of Thy Apostles, or in the garden of Olives, begging Thee to pray for me, to suffer me to wipe off the bloody sweat, and to give me of that blood which flowed to the ground." *

Her grateful soul would not allow her to lose any occasion of stimulating herself by the remembrance of graces received. In 1636, on the evening of All-Saints, we find her in the chapel of the convent, humbly prostrate at the foot of the altar, beseeching her divine Spouse to renew her baptismal innocence, "which she feared to have dimmed or stained." She held herself bound in gratitude for being born in the Octave of All-Saints. . . .

Jeanne had arrived at so great a height of the contemplative life, that, as we have seen, she was favored by an almost continual presence of the Holy Trinity. She asked herself how she should recognize these

* Autobiography.

favors. Our Savior taught her to divide the twenty-four hours of the day into three parts of eight hours for each divine Person. "In the evening, about eight o'clock, thou wilt adore the Father, in spirit and in truth, begging Him to permit thee to converse with Him until four o'clock in the morning; thou wilt contemplate the divine Father in the secret of His glory. Thou wilt pray Him to renew in thee what happened in the night when His right hand delivered the Hebrews, destroying all evil spirits of the night, overcoming the world and all that keeps thee in the captivity of thy enemies, and causing thee to pass dry-shod over the Red Sea of thy passions. Thou wilt beseech the Blessed Virgin, the beloved daughter of the Heavenly Father, to supply thy insufficiency with Him, and to order three choirs of the angels to adore Him for thee, together with the multitude of the saints.

"From four o'clock to noon, thou wilt adore, in spirit and in truth, the Second Person, who descends, a heavenly and divine manna, on the altars on which they consecrate.

"During this time thou shalt pass in spirit through the world, where masses are said, admiring the love that causes the multilocation of My body, blood and soul, inseparably from My Person, to whom they are hypostatically united. Beseech the Blessed Virgin, My august Mother, to supply for thy ignorance by the science with which she is filled, and to order three others of the angelic choirs, and all the saints, whose queen she is, to satisfy for thy omissions.

"From noon to eight o'clock, thou wilt adore the Third Person, the Holy Ghost, who proceeds from the Father and Me, our mutual love, our common flame. He wishes to infuse into thee many graces; He is the zephyr that caresses thee, whom the Spouse desires so

ardently. I implore Him fervently to banish from thee all coldness, to consume thy heart with living flames. Thou art aware, my daughter, that this Spirit cured thee, and sustains thee in thy infirmities, and that He nourishes thee with the milk of His charity for thee, because thou art His beloved. Ask My worthy Mother, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, to order the three other choirs of angels and all the saints to assist them." *

Jeanne says elsewhere :

"I had great devotion for this Spouse of charity, having heard that He inspired preachers. When only seven years of age, I wanted to go to church to see Him in the form of a dove at the ear of the preacher, but I did not tell my thought to any one."

There is no true piety without a sincere and filial love for the Church, and especially, in our day, for the Church, speaking, suffering, in the person of its august head, our Holy Father, the Pope.

Jeanne's whole life was an act of affectionate submission to the Immaculate Spouse of Jesus Christ, and His Vicar. That tenderness often overflows in her writings ; she affirms it in accents of ineffable sweetness : "Thou madest me understand, Dear Love, that Thou bestowest on the Sovereign Pontiff the treasures of Thy merits, and those of Thy saints, and that the souls of the faithful were united in the bosom of the Pontiff, to receive there the divine operations and different forms, through the only Spirit of Thy Father and Thee, the Holy Ghost, who governs the Church in the person of the Roman Pontiff. What a joy to my soul to be a daughter of the Church. It was Thy goodness that conferred this grace which I esteem so great."

* Autobiography.

It was mostly at the foot of the Tabernacle that Jeanne received the heavenly favors. It was there that she was rapt, enlightened, consoled, warned. But, even when not in such extraordinary communications, her life was passed under the action of the real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. "Thence it is," she writes, giving her own history without saying so, "that from behind those veils that conceal that which is terrible in Thy divine Majesty, as through a window, as says the Spouse in the Canticles, Thou directest thy loving glance upon us, and Thou comest forth to communicate Thyself to souls who do not oppose the effusion of Thy tenderness. Oh, how liberal Thou must be to them, since Thou hast bestowed them on me with such prodigality.

"Thy sacred Body is in this Sacrament as a sun that darts on me rays full of light; and from Its adorable wounds, or, rather, from every part of It, there flow torrents of graces and delights, as from so many canals to inundate me."

Our Lord condescended, from His Tabernacle, to be her catechist, and to teach her to pray, as He did for His Apostles.

"Thou didst tell me, O my divine Master, that Thou wouldst instruct me how to please Thee in hearing Mass.

At the Introit, I was to regard myself without subsistence or existence, in my nothingness, as before Thou createdst me;—at the Epistle, I was to represent myself as receiving from Thee being and existence;—at the Gospel, the regeneration by which I am daughter of the Heavenly Father, by adoption, capable of participating of the Sacraments, and of instruction in the things of faith, and of the Holy Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Religion.

"At the Credo, I must make profession of that same faith in all conformity with the sentiment of the Church ;—at the Preface, I must be disposed to die for Thy Holy Name, and for the truths that I believe.

"At the Consecration, I must be as a victim that is to be sacrificed and destroyed as are the bread and wine ; receiving lovingly on my body, my blood and my soul those divine and all-powerful words which the priest pronounces on the elements, desiring to be transubstantiated in Thee, as far as that may be, dying the death of love, which Thou esteemest so much, a death invented on the night of the Supper, which, by the power of divine words, substitutes for the destruction of the substance of the bread and wine, a living God, a glorified man.

"Afterwards, Thou didst tell me that, when the priest puts the particle of the Host into the chalice, I should bury myself in Thy blood. At the communion of the priest, I must arise to Thy glory in a new life, in virtue of this living and vivifying bread." *

What can we say about her fervent communions ! Her correspondence and writings are but an incomplete summary of the dispositions which she brought to them, of the ardor that consumed her, of the graces which she then received.

The Savior taught Jeanne that He had been prefigured not only in Isaac, but in Ishmael, "since He seemed abandoned by His Father for the sins of the world. . . . . He gave a loud cry, the voice of which was heard : the pit that had the source of living water was opened, that is to say, His side. The angel who shows us that admirable fountain is St. John. . . . . In the Sacrament of the Eucharist, is He not an Ishmael, since He is there rejected by

* Autobiography.

nearly all nature." Then, drawing her to the divine banquet, Our Lord continues: "Sarah is the Blessed Virgin, who has always borne the beautiful name, Lady. Thou art Agar, My beloved, who receivest thy Ishmael daily in the Blessed Sacrament. Embrace Him in that state in which He is rejected by the majority of men; sigh and weep over this dishonorable abandonment, and pray for the conversion of the world. It is there that thy heart should break forth in love, and in accents so powerful as to rise to the ear of My Father and greatly move Him. Admire this fountain of love, this blood collected in the Eucharistic cup; drink full draughts of this torrent of delight, this nectar from Paradise, this milk in which the kid is seethed. I am the Angel who bear the key to these waters, and open them for thee, and cause them to overflow for the solace of afflicted souls burning with My love." *

One day, when her confessor had not given permission for communion—it was previous to Father Jacquinot's decision in favor of daily communion—she was hearing Mass, fervently uniting herself with the Celebrant, and saying to Our Lord: "My Love, Thou didst invite me the other day to enter Thy garden, that is, the soul of the priest who says Mass. I answered, behold, I am ready. I was not rejected, for, at the elevation, my divine Love caused me to hear: 'Daughter, it is not on bread alone that man liveth, but on every word that cometh from My mouth, that is, the fulfillment of My will. I told thee before, that I could make My loved ones communicate without the sacramental species.' I then felt in my mouth a taste full of sweetness, that did not last long, but which made me think that it was the Holy Communion given to me by a divine word.

* Letters to Father de Meaux.

"The next morning I was awakened by an interior flame of divine Love that burned my bosom, and I was filled with consolation, but always disposed, in spite of my desires, to be kept away again, if my confessor decreed it. But my divine Love, it seemed, was anxious. Then I received; but He alone knows the graces He imparted in that communion. I saw a green veil surrounded by gold embroideries, and He exhorted me to confidence. After that, I saw a great number of red ribbons, fit to be links or nets of love, and he made me understand that the words that my heart expressed by my mouth were nets that captured Him.

"I then saw something red that resembled a couch or a litter, and I heard these words: 'It is ardent love, empurpled by My blood, where I wish thee to repose.' The divine Love knows how, all that day, He kindled that fire in my bosom, saying: 'This, my daughter, is the recompense of thy desires and thy willing obedience. This delay has made thee the more ardent. One loses nothing by loving Me. I know how to double in one day what is taken away in another.'"

Jeanne has left for us the method taught to her by Our Lord, "of preparing herself for Holy Communion, and of hearing Mass in the character of a mendicant."

"On awaking," she says, "after having adored Thy Majesty, I prayed the Holy Patriarchs to give me their faith, that I might approach the Holy Sacrament, which is the mystery of faith;—the Holy Prophets, to give me their hope which was not confounded, since Thou didst fulfill and verify their prophecies;—the Holy Apostles, for that charity which they received of Thee and of the Holy Ghost, who is fire and light;—the Holy Martyrs, for constancy, because they died

confessing Thy name, and sealed their faith with their blood ;—of the Holy Doctors, the intelligence of Thy mysteries ;—of the Holy Confessors, piety and devotion ;—of the Holy Anchorites, the tears of a loving contrition, that union with Thy Love that makes the soul one with Thy Spirit ;—of the Holy Virgins, purity, to receive Thee virginally, Who art the wine that germinates Virgins, and the crown of Virgins ;—of the Holy Widows, perseverance in Thy service and love ;—of all the Saints who have sanctified themselves in the state of matrimony, patience, of which Thou dost give an example in bearing with the insults of sinners ;—of the Holy Innocents, interior and exterior innocence, that I may approach Thee, who art without stain.

"I ask of the Holy Angels the humility which they practice in their deep abasement before Thy adorable Sacrament ;—of the Holy Archangels, purity, since they are friends of Thy most pure Majesty ;—of the Holy Principalities, nobleness and generosity of heart, that I may be united to Thee Who art the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords ;—of the Holy Powers, strength against my enemies, and weapons of light, that I may approach Thee, the Lord of battles ;—of the Holy Virtues, the ornaments that become a royal Spouse, to be agreeable to Thee, O divine Spouse, Who art the God of virtues and the King of glory ;—of the Holy Dominations, the mastery of my passions, to receive Thee, O sovereign God, Whom they respectfully adore ;—of the Holy Thrones, peace and quietude, to be the throne of Thy pacific Majesty ;—of the Cherubim, wisdom and knowledge to know and adore Thy splendor in humble intelligence of Thy will ;—of the Holy Seraphim, ardent love, that I may lodge Thee in my heart, O Lord, Who art come to

bring Thy divine fire into the world, that it may burn in our hearts and make us perfect holocausts.

"I ask my good angel to accompany me in all my devotions, and to lead me to the Blessed Virgin, Thy worthy Mother, asking of her all that I need, that Thou mayst dwell in me, and transform me in Thee.

"I pray to Thy sacred Humanity, asking of it sweetness and benignity.

"Of the Holy Ghost I ask that He may invest me with virtues from on high.

"Then, addressing myself anew to Thee, divine Word, I ask divine wisdom to converse with Thee, without becoming tired of that excellent conversation, and that I may not communicate through custom, but through a loving desire to be changed and transformed in Thee, dwelling with Thee as Thou dwellest in the bosom of the Father.

"I make my thanksgiving, and return by the same steps by which I rose, praying Thee to treble the glory of the Church triumphant, to multiply the grace of the Church militant, and to deliver from their pain the Church suffering, if that may be and it please Thee. I pray for the Pope, for the King, and for the union of Christian princes; for the conversion of heretics and the heathen, and that all may come to Thy true fold, according to Thy will, most holy and only Pastor."

Holy Communion was for Jeanne truly a source of grace and life. She came to it depressed, she was lifted up; she came sorrowful, she found joy; she carried to it indecision and obscurity, and she bore away light and strength. This confession we meet on every page of her life: "I communicated, and I can not express the content that I experienced. I tell

you, my dear Father, my heart several times throbbed almost to bursting, that it might expand more to the influence of the divine Love. For three quarters of an hour I remained in an ecstasy, and would have remained longer, had I not bethought me of going to hear the sermon." *

On another occasion: "I was so inflamed that my heart melted within me. The fire within was so great that there was an interior agitation, and my heart beat rapidly, not through fear, but with the ardent desire to possess my sacramental food." And, to allay the ardor, the Father had to advance the time of giving her Communion. *

And elsewhere: "I communicated in great peace, and with feelings of inexpressible love, which even induced a sweet ecstasy, lasting until the end of the students' Mass. During the enjoyment of this divine repose, my heart was so expanded that I remained there, scarcely able to breathe, so much did the interior joy lift up a heart which the previous sorrow had depressed to that extent that I could breathe but with difficulty.* After Communion, I was so united to the Blessed Sacrament that I suffered much when, two hours later, I had to rise."

"My daughter," said the Blessed Virgin to her one day, after Communion, "I have done for thee what Rebecca did for Jacob. Many elder born have not the good things that thou hast; though they have done more generous things than thou, I have obtained the blessing of the eternal Father by the venison of divine Love. I have offered up my Lamb as a feast to His Father, who found it delicious. It is with Him that thou art clothed. Oh, what a robe! And, though the voice is feeble, being one of imperfections,

* Letters to Father de Meaux.

yet is it true that the Father regards that less than the habit that clothes thee; it is His First-born, this Immaculate Lamb." *

Mother de Matel, by a privilege rare at that time, was permitted to receive Communion daily, and kept up that pious practice for more than forty years. With how much fervor and spiritual profit we may conceive, judging from the light by which she was filled, the consolation with which she was inundated constantly during her thanksgivings; this is what is meant by that confidence which she made one day in an unreserved conversation with Mother de Belly. It was at the time that Mother Gérin, having dismissed the Prior Bernardon, imposed upon her a confessor of her own selection, who had determined to interdict her daily Communion, and, in the meantime, tortured her in the confessional, making it, as she confessed, "a terrible tribunal." Wishing to prepare her in some measure for the sacrifice, the good sister said one day: "Mother, if they perceive your fear, they may say that you have made a habit of frequent Communion, and, because you have become attached to it, they may take pleasure in depriving you of it so as to try you the more."—"Oh, my daughter, she answered, although it is nearly forty years that I have the happiness of communicating daily, I have not done so once through custom, or against the intention of my superiors; and even now that I speak to you, I am as hungry for the bread of angels as I was the first time that I had the joy of receiving it."

"This salutary hunger made her submissive to all the exactions of her confessor," says one of her biographers. "Every day she asked, with great humility and admirable fervor, permission to approach the holy

* Letters to Father de Meaux.

table. This exact and constant submission disarmed the confessor, and he did not once dare to deprive her of Holy Communion."

If, according to His promise, the Incarnate Word protected her against the evil design which they had concerted to deprive her of the divine nourishment, the strength of her own desire and faith supported her against her infirmities.

"Once, when confined to her bed by a cold in the chest, followed by inflammation and a violent fever, they tried to persuade her to intermit her Communion that she might partake of some food. Her cough had prevented her from sleeping during the night; she was exceedingly thirsty, because, according to her custom, she had taken nothing since eleven o'clock. Sister de Belly, who was at her bedside, seeing her much weakened, and knowing that the confessor, whose permission was needed, would not come until very late, said: "Mother, in the state in which you are, you should not receive to-day. Deprive yourself to-day for the sake of the Community; they tremble for your life. You are worse than you think yourself, and you would offend God by this self-destruction. You should have some deference for your daughters, if you wish, by your example, to induce them to submit, on occasions, when they should die, to their own will."

Mother de Matel became agitated at this proposal. "Daughter," said she, "if you but knew with what ardor I long for Holy Communion, you would take care how you opposed it with such pressing solicitations. No matter how weak I am, or seem to be, no matter how difficult I may find it to walk, yet, if to have that happiness I had to walk on hot coals, I would not hesitate to do so. This I tell you that you may understand the desire which God inspires me

with to unite myself with Him in Holy Communion. All the reasons in the world could not persuade me to deprive myself of my sovereign good. It is all my happiness in this world. What would become of me if I were to lose it? If I were permitted to receive this sacrament of love every time I breathe, I do not know what I would not do to obtain it." * To such a desire they could but submit, and they insisted no longer.

"It is surprising," says one of her historians, "that her long sickness, her frequent voyages, the multitude of affairs that she often had on hand, should never have seemed to her sufficient pretexts to interrupt a practice which demands so great a preparation." But is it not more surprising, perhaps, that, except in her last sickness, circumstances independent of her will should never have rendered the pious practice impossible?"

Our Lord, in the course of time, chose another holy daughter, His spouse, as was Jeanne de Matel, of a celebrated Order, to reveal to her, and through her to the world, the infinite treasure of His heart. But she who had received the mission of causing the riches of the Incarnate Word to be better appreciated in the world could not neglect that better part of this treasure, in His Humanity, and Jeanne de Matel had already chanted the Sacred Heart when Our Lord invited Margaret Mary to make it known to men. "Having put an end to our misfortune, He opened to us happiness. Having said *Consummatum est*, He inclined His head to give us a sign that in his bosom was our felicity, that a lance could open the Holy of Holies; and so it did, but with such address that it laid open to us that heart which desired to be the object of our hearts for time and for eternity.

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

" It is no longer a closed door, though oriental ; it invites courageous souls to enter, giving them the rank of princesses of Juda. These lionesses find there their prey ; they are in possession, not only of royalty, but of the sacred Priesthood. This Holy of Holies is opened for their entrance, not only once a year, but every day. I am resolved to be an eaglet of this royal heart ; I will fix there the gaze of my intellect. It is my prey ; I will grasp it strongly with the talons of His will and mine."

And not only has Jeanne de Matel sung the Sacred Heart, but she contemplated it ; she fixed therein her habitation. In giving an account of a contemplation on the baptism of the Savior, she says : " He showed me how all the flood, even the sea of my weakness, could not quench the fire that consumed Him. And, to make me understand what He said, He appeared to me in a vision, showing His bosom and side widely opened, telling me to remark how they were burned. I am unable to give utterance to the feelings which I experienced at this spectacle. I said to Him : 'Since the fire has so burned everything that I see neither heart nor other organs, I understand the mystery to mean that I should take their place. I am ready. I give Thee my heart and all that I am. I no longer belong to myself, but to Thee, O, incomparable Love.' "

Once, on the feast of St. Louis, she complained to Our Lord of the long delay in the realization of His promises ; the dear Lord answered her complaint by this ineffable favor : " This Love, so full of goodness, at once invited me to enter His heart, as the hospital of grace. I entered, but as a beggar, in great need. His opened side was the entrance ; He told me that I should find there a couch on which to repose my

weakness and infirmities; my table, my food, my light, my medicine, and all that a sick person needs."

Having admitted her to the intimacy of His Sacred Heart, Our Lord described its riches, and showed them as the true piscina of the law of love, into which five fountains poured their waters. "A fountain of water, to wash away sin, and extinguish thirst; a fountain of oil, to anoint the sores of the sick, being the child of oil, *Filius olei*, unction itself; a fountain of wine, for He is the true vine, and the wine that rejoices and strengthens the heart of the sick; a fountain of milk, of innocence, candor and simplicity. The fifth is of blood, which justifies, cures and vivifies."

Thus Jeanne had mysterious intuitions of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. For her the love of Jesus did not remain in the indefinite region of feeling; it was personified. The love of Jesus is the heart of Jesus. In her turn, it was the heart of Jesus which she loved, invoked, consoled and sought as her refuge. Let us listen to her effusions and exhortations, and they will seem to have been caught from the burning lips of Margaret Mary, as she issues from one of her visions: "O, sweet and tender Jesus, it was then, when I was not, and many centuries before my birth, that I was so unfortunate as to wound Thy heart! And that which should render mine the more inconsolable, is that Thine suffered only because it loved me. Oh, who will give me tears enough to bewail so cruel an ingratitude? But, if it be not in my power to make them flow in that abundance, I can at least make reparation by giving Thy heart as much joy as I have inflicted sorrow. Come, then, come, O Lord Jesus, without delay. Everything within me clamors for Thy presence; come and fulfill in Thy spouse all Thy will, Thou shalt meet with no resistance. Happy, a thousand times happy, will she be if Thou shouldst

find her, in constancy and generosity of love, worthy of being for Thy Heart a place of repose and consolation against the sorrow with which so many hearts overwhelm it ; alas, her own till now has resembled them too much."

And, farther on :—"Oh, my dear daughters, if heaven could be a place of regret, shame and confusion, what would not be the regret, shame and confusion of a soul, on entering there, at the sight of the Heart of Jesus Christ, that Heart which has always loved her, or, rather, which has been a victim of its love for her at every moment of her life, without exception ; that Heart, whose tenderness she knew not, but which shall then be shown to her with a clearness no longer dimmed by the obscurity of faith ; that Heart, in fine, in which Jesus Christ will no longer be satisfied to allow her to put her hand, as for the incredulous Apostle, but into which He will sweetly invite her to enter, through the wound which He received at the hand of Love itself. What regret, I repeat, what shame and confusion for that soul forced to see that His Heart, not only, through her fault, enjoys too late the consolation which He had so dearly purchased, and which He had so ardently desired, but that He never can enjoy it, such as He had promised it to Himself."

Everywhere we find this same doctrine and worship of the Heart of Jesus, symbol of His Love, organ of His Love. "You know it now, my daughter, that insatiable love which never said enough. You know this love, this persecutor, or, if I dared to use the word, this tyrant, of which He began to experience the severity when He began to live, and of which, in the whole course of His life, He could not, for one day, nor for one moment, escape the suffering. It was His Heart, which, touched and softened by the extreme

misery in which He saw us involved, thought it could never do enough to free us, to prepare for us the means not to fall back after our deliverance, or resources to emerge again should we be so ungrateful or rebellious as to precipitate ourselves once more. This is the persecutor that ever pursues Him; His Heart that loved us, and solely because it loved us."

We should still have to speak of Mother de Matel's devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the angels and saints, but we had to do so as opportunity offered in those chapters in which we exposed her theological views on different subjects. To these we beg to refer our readers.

CHAPTER IX.

HER HUMILITY.

One of the best fruits of contemplation is humility; for the nearer we come to God the more we see that He is all goodness and power, and that the creature is infirmity, misery, often sin. This is the reason of Mother de Matel's humility.

Mother de Belly has given us her impressions of the simplicity of Jeanne in Avignon, when all the nobility of the place crowded around her with respect, at the time she went there to establish the convent. "She wore a simple black camlet, with long sleeves, and a double band that hid her hair, and even her eyebrows. Over that she had a cap of black taffetas and a crape veil, with a simple kerchief. She never wore any other dress wherever she might be."

But true humility is in the heart, and there we must study it.

They who are strangers to the ways of God might have some difficulty in reconciling in Mother de Matel sentiments of profound humility with her accounts of the great favors done her by her divine Master. She, herself, has, without designing it, answered the objection in this page, which we borrow from her life: "Immortified nature listens to nothing so willingly as to praise, although, for the most part, it is flattery rather than truth; but that which the Heavenly Spouse gives to the soul who loves but Him alone, and who consecrates to Him all the affections of her heart, has not this fault, because, being truth itself, He can not praise that which is not truly worthy of being

praised. Hence, there is no music so sweet to the ear of the beloved soul as the praise of her Spouse; and the fear of self-complacency, in esteeming herself above others on that account, does not diminish her pleasure, because she does not attribute to herself anything that she has. She acknowledges that the virtues and beauty which draw down upon her the complacent regards of her Spouse are gifts that come from Him, and which she can not continue to retain unless He preserves them to her.

"It was this sentiment that, through His goodness, penetrated my heart when He did me so many favors, and unveiled to me the beauty of my soul. I regarded myself as one whom He had gratuitously chosen, to have admired in her the infinite riches of His power and mercy, and then all my joy was to see that, through me, His divine perfections were known and celebrated."* Such is the humility of the saints. Jeanne adds, a little further on: "On hearing these words my soul humbled herself; but the more I lowered myself the more He exalted me. 'I wish,' He continued, 'that thou shouldst bear the crown and the name of Queen, being exalted like another Esther to a more august majesty by the union which I, the Incarnate Word, the King of Kings, have contracted with thee. This union is so admirable that our goods and titles are common to both.'"

The tender effusions of the Savior, the mystic portrait of the spouse, borrowed from the Canticles, and applied to Jeanne, were but commentary on this touching assurance. After having repeated some of the most striking points, she pauses, as though overcome and vanquished, always answering the praises of the Savior by the hymn of her humility. "Thus, O Jesus,

*Autobiography.

didst Thou please to praise Thy spouse, by giving her the same praise that the spouse of the Canticles received from her companions. But what did I answer Thee, O most tender of Spouses? That which she answered; All that in me merits Thy praise, from Thee alone did I receive it, to Thee alone do I return it entire. My Beloved is all to me, and I would be all to Him. So did I answer the evidences of Thy love; I was all confusion, because I recognized myself wholly unworthy." *

This proof of true humility, that begins by exalting the divine munificence, she had in a high degree. She loved to respect Mary's hymn of gratitude. "God has regarded the humility of His handmaid, He hath done great things to me; what I am is the work of His might." And in this she was faithful to the intentions of the Savior. "My divine Spouse taught me clearly that His friends, who draw back in false humility, and stand on ceremony with so great a majesty, displease Him. A shepherdess who has been honored with the crown of a queen, and with the rank of spouse of a powerful monarch, would be uncivil and indiscreet if she were unwilling to approach the king, her spouse, under pretext of her low condition. The one who carries respect so far as to refuse presents offered in pure friendship, because they are too great for him, by his refusal disobliges the one who gives them; it would even seem as though he feared to be obliged in gratitude to his benefactor; it is not, then, true humility." . . . .

But if, in the eyes of her grateful faith, she was "a queen, anointed, crowned and strengthened against her enemies" by the hand of the Savior, she loved to call herself "a little child that does not know its

* Autobiography.

letters ;" to proclaim herself weak, miserable and unfaithful. She goes into ecstasy and rapture at the thought that the contrast between the goodness of God towards her and her own miseries might some time become a theme of wonder and praise for future generations. A wonderful sentiment, itself, as she says, a new grace of her Spouse.

"Since the beginning of the world it has never been heard of that I have treated with any one so familiarly, so continually, without being repelled, as with thee, My dear spouse ; and the wonder, which they can never sufficiently admire, is that, in all My caresses and the sublime knowledge that I have imparted to thy soul, I have always left thee a clear view of thy faults and nothingness, since thou seest in thyself nothing but the operations of My grace and thy own defects. This is what preserves in thee a profound humility, and a low opinion of thyself, My love for thee not permitting that thy heart should be inflated by vanity for the favors thou receivest from Me, thy beloved Spouse."

Mother de Matel thus ingenuously relates a conversation with Father Jacques George, of the Society of Jesus : "I met him at the door just as I was ringing for a confessor. He stopped me, and told me that your Reverence—she was writing to Father Jacquinot—had let him know that Our Lord had given me great graces ; I did not deny it. And he said that I should all the more keep myself in fear and humility. I answered that I did not believe that I thought the better of myself ; that His Majesty often showed me my faults, and Himself kept the chapter of my *culpas* ; that, above all, I desired humility, frequently assuring Him that I would be more content with humility alone, than with all other extraordinary favors, if that virtue

were wanting." An avowal the more precious, because, as Jeanne thought, it was communicated under reserve of the greatest discretion.

When, during her sojourn in Paris, the highest intellects came to seek light of her, and retired charmed with her vivacity of mind, her sure judgment, her facility of speech, what opinion did Jeanne have of herself? "I thought," she tells us, "that Thou hadst taken away from me three-fourths of the beautiful thoughts Thou didst give me in Lyons, and hadst dulled the point of that mind which many had admired; but then those admirers had never been able to persuade me that I was worthy of their praise, and all their compliments had never concealed from me the sight of my own nothingness, nor produced in me a thought that I had deserved Thy favors. I always recognized that they proceeded from Thy goodness." *

Jeanne never ascended the heights of contemplation without being accompanied by humility. In the midst of her relations of grace and tenderness, of which she is the object, she suddenly interrupts herself: "Ah, flee, my Beloved, flee, imitate in the swiftness of Thy flight the agility of the deer, and the young stags; retire to the mountains where they collect scents and perfumes. Carry Thy favors to souls who merit them more than I do, and by the odor of their virtues invite Thee to take in them complacency and delight. I acknowledge that these favors do not cause me to forget my own nothingness, but I fear that I can not correspond to them as I should, with the innocence of a faithful lover.

"I solicited my Spouse, therefore, to flee, and to take up His abode in the aromatic mountains of the heavenly spirits, or in some soul elevated above the

* Autobiography.

world, where He would find more fidelity and correspondence with grace. I said it in great confusion, seeing myself unworthy of His divine embraces, humbling myself, and saying, with St. Peter : ' Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a great sinner.' "

Jeanne's humility, like her heart, was simple and ingenuous ; to express herself she used the truest and tenderest accents. In a movement of love, she said to the Savior : "Come to me or draw me to Thee." She stops suddenly and corrects herself : "Forgive, Lord, my too great boldness! Do to me as they do with those children whom they wish to make polite ; when they come in without saluting, they are made to go back to the door, and to do what they had forgotten. In speaking of love, I had forgotten fear. Love is blind, he comes in by the door that he finds open. Thy benignity came to me first ; I seemed to have wings to fly to Thy arms. But the majesty that is in Thee stays me, and makes me keep at Thy feet like another Magdalen, speaking only by my sighs and tears. I confess, O Lord, that I am the sinner of the universe, but Thou art the Savior of all. Thou canst remit and forgive more than I commit or offend."

The remembrance of Magdalen, by a touching contrast, keeps her in thoughts of humility. "Holy lover," she says to her, "Jesus, our Love, has pardoned more sins in me than in thee ; to me, then, He has shown more mercy. As soon as thou didst know Him, thou lovedst Him, and didst offend Him no more ; and I have continued to offend Him.

"Employ me in all offices ; and, if there be one in Thy house that is mean, I choose to be the meanest of Thy servants, and I would despise the first place in the world were it offered to me."

"Pray to me for all sinners," said Our Lord to her, on an Octave of the Blessed Sacrament. "Ah, God of mercy, I will pray for myself, who am the greatest sinner on earth; that is my thought. Did all sinners receive the graces that Thou givest to me, they would do the good that I do not, and would not do the evil that I do; for which I humbly beg Thy pardon." *

One day she heard Our Lord say to the saints that in her He designed a miracle of love. This word miracle humbled her greatly, and the Savior had to make her quickly feel "with what powerful grace He supported her, and that of herself she did nothing, and had no virtue."

Father de Meaux, her confessor, caused her a similar pain by engaging her to continue in "what he called the solid virtues;" the word virtue frightened her, "for," said she, "by the sight Thou hast given me, I have never seen virtue in myself; if sometimes I have practiced any, it was through Thyself, my divine Love, even as a writer holds the hand of a child to make him form his letters. I find no other comparison at present more proper to express what Thou dost in me." *

Because she was truly humble, Jeanne feared to appear so; sometimes, however, her feelings overcame her, and, deceiving her vigilance, manifested themselves. On the feast of the Epiphany, 1653, on leaving the holy table, her mind was lost in deep confusion, and she retired to a corner behind the door of the chapel, whilst her daughters, candle in hand, renewed their vows before the Host, before communicating. The sight added to her confusion: "Lord," said she, "I have chosen to be the last, the servant, the cook, the scullion in Thy house, and

* Autobiography.

these low offices, these humiliations please me better than crowns and an empire. In imitation of Thee, I kiss in spirit the feet of Thy spouses." With this thought, seeing one of her daughters kneeling just before her, and, thinking herself unperceived, she gently lifted her mantle, and, kissing her feet with respect, remained profoundly prostrate. She protested, at the same time, her entire submission to the will of God for as long as He would please to deprive her of the consolation of making her vows.

"On the tenth Sunday after Pentecost, of the year 1633, on which Sunday the Church reads the Gospel of the Publican, considering myself as a criminal before God, I wished to wean myself from all the sweetness that I enjoyed, and, hiding myself under the stairs by which the priest ascends to give us Communion, I shed tears in such abundance that I collected them in my hands to offer them to my God."

In one of the most beautiful chapters on the Beatitudes, on the love of Jesus Christ, having spoken of the strength received from the Heart of Jesus by a sinful soul, when it returns to God and invokes with confidence His holy Name, Mother de Matel pauses, and says: "Ah, my dear daughters, is it not to this that I myself must have recourse, after having presented it to the ungrateful soul who has lived without love for Jesus Christ, in the dreadful portrait that I have just drawn for you? Alas, I say it to my shame, I have depicted my own unworthy and wicked heart. The name of Jesus, which I have dared to invoke with His Father, has lost on my lips all its sweetness, and, far from asking pardon for me, it has been obliged to ask my just condemnation. How could I hope that it would prove favorable, when I had the temerity to pronounce it before love had graven it on my heart?"

The Savior had to reassure her against the feelings resulting from those slight defects which escape the purest souls. "Thy Beloved," He says, "comes into thy garden of nut trees; they are your imperfections, at first rough and bitter. But, with the help of My grace, I transform them into My own sweetness, causing My mercy to flow from these imperfections even as oil is expressed from the nut."

It was impossible for a soul elevated so high in these supernatural regions, on its descent not to become the subject of the raillery of the incredulous, and the insults of the wicked, when it began to stammer forth some of these mysteries. Her visions were often treated as foolish dreams or frauds. Nature was ready to feel aggrieved, but grace drew from it joy. On one of these occasions, Jeanne says: "My soul found itself filled and transported with an extraordinary joy. Promenading my chamber, I said: Lord, how happy I should feel were I to be accounted a fool by men, if only my folly did not offend Thee." *

Jeanne, as we have said, in her candid simplicity, in her childish humility, that did not permit her to see or seek herself in the most extraordinary graces, had great facility in speaking of the things of God. At first, the world was inclined to be offended and mistaken. So it happened at Grenoble, when she went there to make the foundation. Some of those who sought interviews with her did so rather to satisfy their curiosity than with a view to edification, or, desirous to find a pretext for diminishing her credit, they published that vanity was the source of her communications on the things of God, and they represented her as a woman without discretion, speaking when she had better have kept silent. Providence

* Autobiography.

permitted this little storm, in order to procure for His pious servant an opportunity of being defended by a voice of authority, a certainty of doctrine, a firmness of conviction, at which doubt should disappear. If Mother de Matel had not been disparaged, we should not have had, perhaps, so eloquent a tribute to her interior spirit, her wisdom, her virtues, and, especially, to her humility.

The Prior du Croisil, knowing that Father Gibalin had for a long time directed Jeanne in spiritual things, wished to learn of so experienced a theologian, so conscientious a priest, what he should think of the unfavorable opinions then circulating in Grenoble. He received the following letter: "I have never doubted that Rev. Mother de Matel would meet with contradiction in her pious and generous designs; that he who has ever opposed the Incarnate Word would employ all his stratagems to impede the glory this holy woman would procure Him. He does so now the more insidiously, because he makes use of those who should defend what they attack under the false plea of specious piety; but, as this enemy has been defeated everywhere, so shall he be at Grenoble.

"I have no fear of Mother de Matel's courage in the contempt with which she is treated; the Incarnate Word, Who has chosen her for His dearly beloved daughter, to show in her the wonders of His grace, will silence this contradiction, and, perhaps, make her opponents understand that it is He Whom they attack in their false zeal. Time will show. I shall only say, Reverend Sir, in answer to your letter, that they who think themselves very wise in being offended at the frankness and simplicity of Mother de Matel, and in disapproving of her readiness to speak of the things of God, are mistaken. Such persons would conduct all souls in their own way, and according to their own

humor, not perceiving that the Spirit of God, one in Himself and simple, is varied and multiplied in His effects; and, as in the order of nature He acts so diversely, according to the variety of natural causes, so, too, He acts with no less diversity in the order of grace.

"Moreover, these gentlemen would constitute virtue where it is not, namely, in keeping silence on the things of God. I can not see that perfection consists in not speaking of God, nor in an unwillingness to do so; on the contrary, it seems to me that there is nothing more pious than so to speak, provided one does so simply, candidly, without affectation or self-pride.

"If Mother de Matel were to converse of the trifles of the world, or were affected in her discourse, I would look upon it as a manifestation of self-love; I would say that she had no interior spirit; no true spirituality in her. But I observe that she speaks of the things of God with so much simplicity that the most critical are constrained to admit that there is not the least appearance of affectation in what she says; her conversations, no matter how long they may be, instead of dissipating the spirit or preventing recollection, maintain it. And, certainly, perfect recollection consists in having the spirit always fixed on God, and, if one is always speaking of Him, it is a sign that one wishes to think of nothing else.

"The conversation of Mother de Matel is not the fruit of study, or of an acquired knowledge, it is the result of light gained in prayer; and, as proof of this, I adduce the many singular conversions wrought in those who listen to her.

"I would ask those gentlemen what proof of recollection they find in a mournful silence, the

especial fruit of melancholy or ignorance. When they visit Mother de Matel, through curiosity, or to criticise her, or for some worthy and pious motive, would they have her dismiss them with a severe countenance, or be entreated before she would speak to them, be on her guard against them, or refuse to speak, except with the ignorant, whom it is easy to deceive? Is it not better that she should speak when desired to do so? They can see that the source is inexhaustible; that they are original things; that she does not hesitate to speak before any one; that she does not blush for the Gospel, and does not fear the censure of men. Are they not obliged to acknowledge to themselves that it is something wonderful? For my part, I must frankly confess that what has most convinced me that this soul is led by the Spirit of God is, that a woman, who, for thirty years, speaks continually of God, writes whole volumes on spiritual matters, communicates with all sorts of persons, converses with the most learned and skillful, with critics the most acute, has, nevertheless, never been found in any error, whether in writing or in speech; has always been admired for her knowledge, and has been reproached with nothing save speaking too much of God; which is to say that God occupies her too wholly, and communicates Himself too much to her.

"I see what may seem offensive to these gentlemen; it is that favors received from God should be concealed for the sake of humility, following in that the example of the saints and of Jesus Christ Himself; but, if it were necessary always to conceal the graces of heaven, we should never know what passes in the saints. This young person, who has never studied, has not been able to learn save in the school of the Holy Ghost; if she can not speak of divine things without letting some little of her own heart be seen,

should she on that account be condemned to silence? Then was it also necessary that the Apostles should not speak of the things of God, since they could not do so without letting it be perceived that they had learned them through an infused knowledge. The same must be said of all those saints who have spoken in a language beyond their natural capacity.

"On the other hand, humility is much less offended by the sincere candor which they blame than by a silence that has for cause, self-love. The soul that regards the graces it receives as its own, and who fears that if they be discovered it would deserve to be honored, hides them as a treasure; but, on the contrary, a soul that regards them as favors from heaven, and takes no glory in them, is not at so much trouble to keep them secret. If Mother de Matel had any vanity, she would, no doubt, be content with being secret and important; but she abhors all duplicity and affectation. She brings forth the things of God as she received them, in all simplicity; she asks for no glory save His to Whom it belongs. One can be silent in pride, and speak in humility. It is not surprising that in the flow of conversation, and in an emotion that carries one away, amongst a million of graces received, some should be manifested; this has been seen among the saints. They have spoken when the Spirit of God pressed them to speak. It is well known that women have been consulted as oracles by the greatest doctors. Had they been dumb till then, or had they disdained to speak except to those great men? Or else, did they only answer when questioned, and how is it that we have preserved their writings? Or, again, is ther more harm in speaking than in writing?

"The Savior of the world has taught by His example that one can keep silence, or can speak in a way to glorify God; He was silent for thirty years,

and how often afterwards did He not speak of Himself? It is true that our life should be hidden in Jesus Christ, but they little understand this saying who infer that the eye of man is never in any way to be enlightened by our virtues. The sense of this maxim is, as the contemplatives say, that the interior should be the principle of all our action; and that interior is the hidden fire of the love of Jesus Christ, of which we can never discern but a few sparks. And this is what takes place in Mother de Matel, for they are mistaken who suppose that she displays all the riches of her soul; but a few signs are allowed to appear.

"I conclude, then, that we are neither to blame great reserve nor great readiness in such matters; both may be good, or both bad. Judgment must be left to God, or to those persons who know the soul in question fully." . . .

This answer had its due effect. It reduced to silence those who had suffered themselves to be prejudiced. Indeed, one little knew Jeanne who was capable of believing that she sought her own advantage in these conversations on the things of God. When the knowledge of her supernatural states began to spread, she suffered greatly from the sensation that it produced. Resolved on seeking flight in solitude, she consulted her directors; she addressed Our Lord in affectionate protestations of humility. "O, my God, seat Thyself in my heart, *et non commovebitur;* be first in its thoughts, words and actions, and be also the last, covering the fire that Thou hast lit on the hearth of my heart with the ashes of humility. She desires to glory in mockery and to rejoice thereat; and humbles herself before Thee because of praise, to Whom she returns it, to Whom it is due, O, her all." *

* Letters to Father Jacquinot.

Yet more, being ordered to write the daily journal of her thoughts, actions, feelings and favors, Jeanne did so in a sober, concise and nervous style. In reading her letters to her directors, you feel that she is unwilling to enlarge, to speak long of herself, and by, a ruse of her humility, she does not put herself forward in the first person, but speaks always as though there were question of another.

She frequently did not hesitate to sustain severe struggles to defend her desire of being hidden, against counsels less severe. During her sojourn in Paris she had revelations on important points concerning the House of Orleans, the King and the Queen, and the verification of certain points gave assurance of the truth of the whole prophesy. She says: "My Secretary, who knew what Thou hadst revealed to me, often pressed me to make the secret known to Madame de Cressay, who loves me, as I honor her, that is, greatly. She has even solicited me very often to go to the Royal Palace, saying that I retarded the glory of Thy Establishment, in not telling the Queen what Thou hadst said of her, of our King and the Duke of Anjou. Her words were of no avail to make me quit my retreat. She would say: Your enemies do you harm in the Queen's mind, telling her that you give the habit to your religious and do not take it yourself: in her presence they blame you for what they do not understand. You have the key to hearts, and you do not use it. Do you not fear to bury talents with which God has so liberally endowed you?' The more she urged me, the less was I inclined to do what she sought; my only happiness was, and is, to be hidden to all visible things, that I may be seen by Thee only, my Love." *

* Autobiography.

When her daughters were witnesses of some of those exterior manifestations by which God revealed the interior graces with which he filled her, they generally did not venture to speak to her of them, lest they should grieve her. If her directors obliged them to do so, she made little of it. "I laugh at my daughters," she says, "when they tell me that they have seen lights, or perceived odors that seemed to them supernatural. I do not attend to these visible signs, but to the invisible mysteries that Thou workest in my soul, whilst these things are seen or inhaled by those whom Thou makest witnesses of Thy goodness to me; who am most unworthy of them." *

Perhaps no one was better acquainted with the beauty of Jeanne's soul than Father Gibalin, and, because his rectitude, perspicacity and good sense are so manifest in the testimony that he gives of her, we love to quote him once more on her repugnance to show herself, as we did on her repugnance to speak through vanity. This is how he wrote to a friend of the Order, the Abbé de Chusy, some days after the departure of the pious foundress on her second journey to Paris:

"Mother de Matel did great violence to herself, and wept copiously. I have never seen her so cast down in any affliction that has befallen her, not because she left her daughters, to whom she has always shown a truly maternal affection, nor from any other consideration whatever, but because she found herself obliged to quit the holy solitude in which she was hidden, in order to appear in the great world. She goes to the Court as others go to the Cross, and to applause as to death. This soul is the humblest that I have ever seen or known. She rejoices when she is blamed, and when calumnies, even the greatest,

* Autobiography.

assail her, and when she is reduced to a little room, and known but to few; but she weeps, sighs, is afflicted, inconsolable, even to the loss of sleep and appetite, and to the danger of her health, when they make her appear in the finest scenes in France, and lead her as in triumph to receive the applause that her virtues merit, and the extraordinary graces received from God seem to demand. Oh, how great is her soul before God, and how little in her own eyes!

"If I had to speak to you of the singular virtue of this holy Mother, as may perhaps be necessary on some occasion, what wonders I should have to tell, and how the world is deceived when it thinks that she is vain! . . . After having treated so often and so openly with this candid soul for six years, having studied her conduct, and pondered long and often on the sources of such light, and of favors so extraordinary from Heaven, so freely bestowed on her, I have not been able to find any, next to the grace of God, but her profound humility in the reception and use of grace, and her absolute confidence in the divine goodness. What marvels have I not seen in this regard, and how often have I not been filled with joy on this point!"

The humility of Mother de Matel was not less apparent in her intercourse with her directors. She generally promised them obedience in all things possible, and Our Lord agreeing thereunto, submitted His action to their will. "My gratuitous action in thee obeys him," said He, speaking of Father de Meaux, "he commands Me, the Heaven of thy heart, to withdraw the waters that are ready to make a deluge of thy tears; they at once retire, and return when he permits, as for Elias." The good Father, in a feeling of humility, having thought of renouncing the direction of this chosen soul, she wrote to him, with a

humility still greater, and that could not fail to conquer: "O, Reverend Father, I know that I do not deserve the entire loaf of the favorite daughter, accepted in Jesus by your Reverence; but say that I may be as the least at your feet, to receive the crumbs that you will bestow in your charitable looks. If you will not give me the entire loaf in your absolute commands, which are to me a delicious repast in the higher will, I am determined to climb the mount of perfection at the cost of death upon the cross, by the knife of abnegation and interior mortification. Take it and perform the office of the priest.

Her correspondence with Father de Meaux exhibits to us a continual struggle with herself to arrive at that absolute confidence that keeps secret no grace received; as for imperfections, she was ever ready to confess and even to exaggerate them. What attention to realize the image that Our Lord had presented her of the dispositions she should have in this regard! "My daughter, thou must put and hand over thy soul into the hands of thy Bishop and Pastor. I have it in My hands, as being thy Sovereign Pastor, I put it in those of this Father, thy Pastor." Then I had a vision so delicate that I can not make it known in all its subtlety, for it was not of the imagination, but of the intellect; my soul was as a little child in the arms of my Spouse; pressed to His bosom, I felt His sweet breath, and then He put me in your arms with the same gentleness that He held me in His own." *

Our Lord had the humility of His beloved daughter so much at heart that He made her find occasion to practice it there where she should rather have expected consolation and esteem. Father de Meaux, whose direction had been so useful to her, and who had so

* Letters to Father de Meaux.

great a veneration for her virtues, often mortified her by his persistent endeavor to renounce her direction. "This morning, after Communion," she writes, "I said to my love: 'What! how is this? The more Father Rector rejects me, the more do I want him as director, no matter how much he mortifies me.' I then heard: 'Daughter, when I rejected the Cananean, she was more strongly drawn by My Father; when the Father rejects thee, I draw thee more strongly to him, so that he is vanquished.'"

When, on her first voyage to Paris, the Fathers of the Society of Jesus suddenly refused her direction and support, thus compromising her in the eyes of others who knew not the motives of their conduct, Jeanne was not troubled nor cast down; she kept herself humbly at the feet of her divine Master: "Is it I who through ambition have presumed to institute an Order? Or is it Thou in Thy incomparable goodness Who has inspired and destined me to this work? If it be I, then, O Lord, fear not, if I may say so, to confound me in time; the fault would be one of ignorance rather than malice. I have protested at Lyons that I did not seek my own glory, when some one, fearing that I would not succeed, said: 'If you were known only at Roanne, the shame would not be so great.' I told him, besides, that I would be content to be shamed, not only in Lyons and Roanne, but in all the world, for Thy love's sake. I feel now the grace and courage to suffer a universal confusion before all sorts of persons." *

We have related how Mother of Calvary undertook to satisfy the desire that Jeanne had always entertained to be covered with opprobrium and to be accounted a fool. Mother de Matel daily rejoiced at the foot of the

* Autobiography.

Crucifix. "Now, at last, O Lord, I have come to be despised. I thank Thee for having procured for me the abasements that make me like to Thee. I desire them and love them more than ever. Draw Thy glory from this, that the daughters Thou hast given me are, without their intending it, the occasion. Forgive them and make them worthy of Thy love."

May these precious seeds of humility be the inheritance of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word, and may the virtues of the Mother live forever in the daughters!

CHAPTER X.

HER PATIENCE.

The life of Mother de Matel was one continued exercise of patience. From her earliest childhood she had been subject to suffering; but when God had introduced her into the way of contemplation, He was careful to mingle pain with consolation, and even permitted that His favors and consolations should themselves be the cause of suffering. "Thou knowest, my dear Love, that my frequent raptures and continual ecstasies caused me six long illnesses, lasting many years. I did not tell my physician that my continual fever was occasioned by them. I took the remedies that he prescribed, and joyfully suffered great pains and all the ardors of the fever." *

Adopting and commending the sublime challenge of the Apostle, she exclaims, after having allowed us to perceive some of her corporal pain: "May my headaches, which I have borne for twenty years; may the disease of my eyes, which I have suffered now for more than twelve years; may the disease of the stone continue until my death; may the acute pain which I experience in my bowels, torment me as much as Thou pleasest; may my disgust at all food endure through life; but may it please Thee to bless the end as Thou hast the beginning. I mean my birth; all the rest is as nothing." *

In another place, she says: "Several persons, witnessing my continual sicknesses, had great compassion for me; but I, who in my devotion had more

* Autobiography.

joy than I experienced pain in my afflictions, laughed at the sufferings that were charmed by Thy love, and considered them as so many rounds of the ladder by which I would mount to heaven." * And, later, she says: "The afflictions that I suffer for so many years would have been the death of many, but Thou didst sustain me by the bread of the strong."

It can not, then, be doubted that disease in its most severe forms was the inseparable companion of Mother de Matel, and her language and activity prove that her patience was equal to her sufferings.

But the most beautiful proof of her patience is undoubtedly found in the history of the struggles in which she was engaged when founding her Order, installing the different houses, and defending their temporal and spiritual interests. Our readers have read this history, they remember its vicissitudes. What constancy she needed not to be discouraged; what patience, not to wish ill to the authors of these contradictions, to renew so frequently the attempt to solve difficulties, so often overcome and ever recurring.

What was particularly painful, was that the intrigues of her enemies stooped to the lowest means, and sought to deprive her of the love and obedience of her daughters. A certain person succeeded but too well with one of them with whom he had frequent interviews, and in whom he insinuated his own sentiments. Mother de Matel had been a mother to her, and had brought her up from childhood. Having recognized in her great talents, she had entrusted to her important offices, which she had successfully filled. In consequence of conversations with this enemy of the foundress, she suffered an entire change; she was no longer an humble and obedient religious, but a proud

* Autobiography.

and passionate daughter. Mother de Matel suffered all in silence, because the offense was a personal one, and always testified for her the same love and cordiality. The other religious, seeing their Mother so kind and patient, and on the other side so much ingratitude and passion, sometimes said to her: "Mother, your goodness is excessive towards one who does not love you as she should." But it was Mother de Matel's habit not to give way to resentment, hoping that God would one day restore to her her daughter; and yet they could see no change. The foundress, who keenly felt this estrangement, and wished to bring her back to her duty, met her one day, embraced her with all a mother's tenderness, and said, in loving sorrow: "My daughter, too many witnesses have concurred to convince me of what I would not hitherto believe; you have been false to me. But they shall not prevent me from protecting you, and you shall not even be put in penance." Mother de Matel allowed her tears to flow freely, more in compassion than in sorrow for the offense. The religious, recovering from her blindness, acknowledged her fault, and openly confessed that she had offended the Lord in following the evil counsels which they had given her against her Mother and benefactress.

She did not stop there, but, in a letter to the one who had deceived her, that was destined to become public, she did homage to the good Mother. After an humble acknowledgment of her fault, she adds: "I pass for a Judas in the house, and wherever my sin is known. It is only Reverend Mother, whom alone I have offended, who has the goodness to suffer my presence, to my greater confusion. . . . I recognize, more than ever, that she is led by the good spirit, bearing my calumnies with so great patience.

She has never spoken of you but in terms of great esteem, as I have often told you."

This mistaken sister, brought back by the patient indulgence of Mother de Matel, ever after led a life of edification and perfect submission.

By one of those contradictions common to persons of little judgment, Mother Calvary Gérin, when Superioress of the Convent of Paris, was sometimes prodigal of caresses to the foundress, that agreed ill with the general course of her evil proceedings. She called her her good Mother, and herself her Benjamin. These senseless demonstrations wearied her more than all the rest; one day she could not refrain from saying to her: "You caress me with one hand and smite me with the other." This was the only vengeance that she took for conduct that was without example. And, since this unfortunate episode is once more before us, we may be excused if we insist a little, to the glory of the holy foundress.

Mother de Matel was never more humbled and despised than at this period, God permitting it for her greater perfection. We have described these painful scenes. Sister Jeanne of Jesus de Belly was witness to them, and, in an astonishment that was like to that of the friends of Job: "I remembered," she says, "when she was sought by all, when she was a famous oracle, whom all alike came to consult. Esteemed at Court, and venerated by the people, the highest and the least were honored by her acquaintance. I compared her past greatness with her present state of humiliation, in which, without any change in her merit, she was despised and abandoned by nearly all, through the intrigues of a woman devoid of talent. She was looked upon as one whose mind was enfeebled by age, incapable of conducting any affair; if she

wished to give counsel, or to speak as the Spirit of God inspired her, she was not listened to, or heard in cruel compassion for what was held as delirium."

"Mother de Matel," says one of her historians, "suffered all with great constancy, and would not allow any measure to be taken to undeceive the public, and to free herself from vexation. Madame de Villemonteil, who for some time had retired to the Convent of the Incarnate Word, had frequent conversations with her that the Superioress could not prevent. In these interviews she sought her own spiritual profit, but she at the same time tried to administer consolation. She told her one day that she should complain to the Chancellor, Séguier, of their conduct towards her, and that she would support the appeal with all her influence. The foundress rejected the offer with a kind of vivacity, and answered: 'Madame, however great the cause given to me for dissatisfaction, I could never resolve on the step that you propose. Do you forget that they are my daughters? How could I wish to bring down persecution upon them? Ah, Madame, it is a strange thing to be a mother, as I am.'" *

Nor did Mother de Belly meet with better success, when, unable longer to endure the spectacle before her, she one day entreated her to suffer that an appeal should be made to the friends of the Order. "I forbid it, my daughter," said Mother de Matel; "you could not give me a greater pain. My beloved secretary had made the same proposal, and would have committed the same error, had I not prevented her. The Lord wishes to try me; it would be a sin to counteract His designs. If my daughters cause me suffering, it is to them alone that I should complain; I love them too

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

well to expose them to blame ; I should prefer to suffer even more, if necessary." In vain did Mother de Belly represent that her present humiliation might prejudice the Order, and that she was thus in conscience bound to put an end to it. "No, no, my daughter," she answered, "my hour has come to suffer ; it is my part to be faithful. Perhaps I am too quick to complain, but you must not heed me, and you must not think me desirous to remove the evil that I bear. No, daughter, it is rather for yourselves that I grieve, than for myself, who have but a short time to live."

It was not only an example of patience that Mother de Matel was thus giving to her daughters, but, as we have said, a far more precious lesson, teaching them not to admit outsiders to a knowledge of what transpired in the Community. It was equally in vain that the most devoted friends of the Order, even religious, as Father de la Barre, a Jesuit, tried to persuade her to adopt this means. And, one day, as Sister de Belly insisted more than usual, she answered her firmly, revealing the secret of her admirable patience : "Consider the example of the Incarnate Word in His Passion ; did He flee ? Did He avoid the persecution and fury of His enemies ? Did He not prefer to be accounted weak-minded, a fool, rather than to act contrary to the orders of His Father ? He is our model." They could but respect her love of the cross, and the delicacy of her maternal discretion.

But she could not wholly prevent a rumor of this strange treatment from passing the walls of the convent, and becoming known to her friends. As soon as Madame Séguier received the information, she hastened to her, and complained with lively affection that she had not been directly apprised, gently reproaching Jeanne with a want of confidence in her.

"At first, Mother de Matel was unwilling to acknowledge the truth, but the noble lady pressed her so that she had to own to her suffering. She did so with all possible moderation. Far from laying the blame on any one, she represented her afflictions as benefits from God, and expressed so lively a joy in suffering for Him that the good lady was extremely edified. 'You see, Madame,' said Jeanne, 'that it was useless to reveal to you the troubles of which you speak. They are graces with which Heaven wishes to favor me. I beg you not to seek to diminish them. It is the greatest mark of favor that you can show me.'" *

And in this patience Jeanne was consistent with herself. Long since, when crushed under the weight of trial and suffering, she had asked for an increase of her cross. One day, in order to recompense her desire of pleasing Him, Our Lord had said that, if she asked for it, He was disposed to give her half of His kingdom. Moved by this loving declaration, she says: "I answered, that I asked for sufferings in this world. Thou didst say that they were Thy kingdom in Thy mortal life, at the end of which Thou hadst received a crown that was fixed deeply to Thy head, and that, since I desired that portion of Thy life, Thou wouldst share it with me." †

As happens in strongly tempered characters, who are gentle by virtue, rather than by nature, patience did not exclude firmness.

The Coadjutor of Paris, passing by the convent in the Faubourg Saint Germain, at the moment when provisions were being taken into the convent, wished

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

† Autobiography.

to profit by that occasion to enter it. To the respectful observations made to him, he replied that it was his right. Mother de Matel was present. As this pretension was opposed to the authority of the Bishop of Metz, who had jurisdiction over the Faubourg and the convent, she refused her consent. She had observed every mark of respect and humility, but her firmness wounded the Coadjutor, who revenged himself by contemptuous words and unbecoming remarks. Jeanne was informed of it, and repaid his proceeding by giving the prelate a larger part in her prayers.

The same firmness is seen in her relations with her daughters, when she feared that her silence would authorize abuses, or when she noticed proceedings that would compromise the spirit of the Order, a beginning of ingratitude or of resistance to authority. Then, her words, usually so sweet and gentle, became sharp and vibrant as the strokes of a scourge. She writes to a Superioress, who had allowed the reputation of her house for regularity to be endangered: "Twice since Christmas I have warned you of what was said of my sheep; you received my warnings as dogs do who bite at the stone which is thrown at them, and not at the hand that threw it. At present I hear that you say your Mother leaves you in want. She who says so has made herself unworthy of the charity which your Mother exhibits to her daughters on every hand. What crosses come to her from the four quarters of her four houses! The greatest criminals are dismembered by four horses only, she is quartered by four houses! If they thus form for her a cross of St. Andrew, she will salute it as being good for her, and in the spirit of charity she will unite herself to her all, the Incarnate Word." The lesson was bitter, but the point of the arrow was softened by her resignation.

The gift of consolation is the natural fruit of Christian patience. Accustomed to suffer for God, to find in Him her help, the soul becomes familiar with the turns of that mysterious road that leads from earth to heaven, and acquires a holy skill in conducting others. Jeanne had that grace, and willingly made use of it in her life. It is touching to see her, in the flower of her youth, so timid and so humble, encouraging and sustaining her confessor, Father de Meaux, in his sufferings, that veteran of the priesthood and of the religious life. "My good Father, Our Lord became impassable only after delivering His Body to the cross, subject to the power of tyrants and cruel executioners. But, when they thought him exterminated, He was then most strong. . . . They tell me that you are worse. Well, you must not, therefore, lose courage, but increase it. Remember that it behooved Christ to suffer. Blessed are they whom He finds worthy to imitate Him. It is told of Him that, when He was afflicted, He looked if there were any to offer consolation, and there was no one to grieve with Him. Your Reverence has many who do for you almost as much as was done for St. Peter in prison. . . . My good Father, have patience and courage, that you may cull the roses of your good example from the thorns of your sufferings. Submit yourself to the divine Jesus, our Love." *

Jeanne, we see, was already mistress in the science of the cross; she knew how to console and to encourage, because she had already learned to suffer. It is the law of the Gospel, as ever: "*Cœpit facere et docere.*" †

* Letters to Father de Meaux.

† Acts I., 1 "He began to do and to teach."

CHAPTER XI.

HER MORTIFICATION AND OBEDIENCE.

On the day that the Convent of Paris was blessed, "whilst the Rev. Father Prior was placing the cross on the door, Sister Elizabeth Grasseteau saw Thee planting in my heart a cross, as a New Year's gift, on that, the first day of the year, establishing in me an interior convent, through the cross. That cross I adored in Thy hands, and I received it as a precious present; that cross crucified me, not for a day, but during several years; I can not express its pains, because it is at once a pain and a delight to be united to Thee." *

Jeanne, like all the saints, loved the cross too well not to seek to make it heavier by voluntary mortifications. We have related in our first volume the mortifications of her youth; our readers will recollect how, by iron chains, disciplines, fasts and privations of every kind, she had made a living wreck of her body. This love of corporal penance was carried so far that her directors, taking into consideration her habitual bad health, were often obliged to moderate it. She appealed to Our Lord, but He was on the side of moderation and prudence.

"The divine Master, the Holy Ghost," Jeanne confesses, "desires that your Reverence should first correct the defects of the queen and mistress, the soul, before those of the animal flesh, her servant and slave, as I understood yesterday, when I seemed troubled because your Reverence would not give me back my chain.

* Autobiography.

'My daughter, who gives me the most pleasure, the one who trains my Queen, or he who trains my horse?' By this I understood that you pleased His Majesty more by correcting the imperfections of my soul rather than those which belong to the body." *

Not only did her confessors unwillingly permit extraordinary mortifications, but they were obliged to forbid her abstinence during Lent, and to abate the rigor of the fast, to her a great humiliation and a great grief. "I passed Lent as sorrowfully as in preceding years,"—she speaks of 1658—"not being allowed to abstain, nor to fast with strictness; and that sorrow increased when I listened to the preface of the Mass." †

Her health was nearly always bad. Speaking of a physician of Roanne, M. Falconet: "I owe him," she writes, "obligations greater than I can express for having, after God, brought me six times out of sickness which was believed to be mortal, when I was still living in my father's house." ‡

It was not much better after she had left it. We know that her nights were generally sleepless. "The multitude of occupations," she writes to Father Cosme, "visits ordinary and extraordinary, steal nearly the entire day; in the evening I find myself so overcome by headache and weakness that I cannot write a letter without being rendered incapable of an hour's sleep." It was often midnight, and even later, before she could get to sleep, and she always rose at an early hour. Her weariness had become so excessive that they had forbidden her to rise so soon. But, so far from being a concession to sensuality, the order was a mortification, and the Spirit of God would choose that

* Letters to Father de Meaux.

† Autobiography.

‡ Letter to Bishop of Nimes, 1639.

hour, passed in continual prayer, to visit her with His sweetest favors.

Although eager for mortification, and anxious to suffer for love, Mother de Matel cheerfully submitted her desires to the guidance of her directors. Speaking of her infirmities, she says: "If my indiscretions increased them it does not much matter. Thou knowest, my dear Spouse, that I did not want to disobey my confessors, in fasting, in performing more penance than they allowed me, however great my desire to do so." *

Jeanne exercised over her will and inclinations the mortifications which she was not allowed to practice on her body. During nearly the whole time of her second sojourn in Paris, she applied herself to the care of the kitchen. Attracted by the recollection and contemplation which she enjoyed in these vulgar occupations, she would willingly have resigned the care of exterior things. Of this she complained to St. Michael and the angels: "Assembling, as it were, in a chapter or council, they concluded, in common with the blessed, that I should remain and be confirmed in the office of cook of the Convent of the Incarnate Word; and that He, together with the angels, had prepared and given the manna to the people of Israel, during their forty years' stay in the desert." *

One of Mother de Matel's greatest mortifications, as we may easily conceive, when we reflect on her attraction for prayer, was the obligation consequent on the interests of her work and her reputation for sanctity, of being incessantly in communication with the world. From such interviews she returned broken with the fatigue of long sitting which, increased her physical sufferings, troubled by the faults which she

* Autobiography.

feared to have made during those hours that might have been passed in prayer, and, as it seemed to her, less disposed to that pious exercise. Thus she did not hesitate to declare: "I am exceedingly mortified when obliged to be at the grating." But, on the other hand, she was so zealous for souls, so good and condescending! She did not dare to withdraw herself from exactions that her heart ratified, but which in her humility she ascribed to human respect.

Her spirit of mortification is signally displayed, and in the most edifying manner, in the disposition with which she went to Roanne, and dwelt there for a time, on her return from Paris in 1653. "As we drew near," she says, "my soul was inexpressibly depressed, fearing the applause of my compatriots, and being more sorrowful than I can say. The Abbé de la Piardiére, our escort, observing it, asked me whence came the sadness that appeared in my countenance. Being my confessor, and one to whom I owed so much, and in whom I placed such confidence, I answered that it was the divine wisdom that ordered or permitted this state, which I preferred, because it detached me from all that flesh and blood might incline me to, and that I would deprive myself of the happiness of seeing my only sister, whom I had not seen more than two or three hours altogether in twenty-five years, if that, rather than the joy of meeting her, would please Thee more. Thou wast content with this disposition in which I kept myself interiorly, during the four days that we lodged with her, notwithstanding the visits, and the joy which the people, together with my brother-in-law, Grimant, testified by their cordiality and liberality. My soul, united to Thee, could not enjoy their applause. I experienced two contradictory feelings; an apparent and willing satisfaction, so as to grieve no one, conversing with

all as though Roanne were to me a terrestrial paradise, and yet, during their acclamations, my soul was as a stranger amongst my kindred." *

It would seem that Jeanne had no violent assaults to sustain in defense of the angelic virtue ; but her life offers some traces of such combats imposed on her delicate conscience, to preserve her in humility, and to purify her love. Even when God caused her to voyage in full sail on the ocean of consolation, He permitted some storms. "She found herself troubled by disagreeable thoughts and imaginations, at which she was much astonished, though she did not dare to ask to be delivered from them, knowing that God used them for her humiliation, after having been for so many years free from them. She often said that she suffered violence ; her divine Love did not fail to console her from time to time, but not so exclusively as before, which caused her to fear that she had given cause for this abandonment.

On the feast of the glorious virgin and holy martyr, Agnes, 1622, she complained of the trouble caused in her by these imaginations, and it was answered her: "Daughter, why do you wish to withdraw from the conversation of these persons on account of such imaginations? Did not St. Jerome have them also?" On the feast of St. Dorothy, she was again subjected to them, even during Holy Communion. Greatly confused, she repeated the words of the Apostle, "*Infelix Ego.*" † She then heard: "Daughter, for many years you have been free from such imaginations, and it seemed to you that you would never experience them. I kept you as a pure spirit, in the body, as regarded them; but as, since Easter,

* Autobiography.

† Rom., VII., 24. "Unhappy that I am."

I have wished to subject thee to a strict obedience, in little rather than in great things, and this more frequently, and have lately made thee suffer an extreme poverty of thought, to which thou hast great repugnance, so, now, I wish thee to undergo the same repugnance through these imaginations, and that thou shouldst gain by experience in combat the prize of chastity. Being in the world, it seems more difficult to thee ; courage, daughter. 'No one,' says My holy one, St. Paul, 'shall be crowned unless he has legitimately fought.' Thou truly believest what the virgins said to the tyrants who threatened them with the deprivation of their virginity : 'Our crowns shall be doubled.' Their enemies were visible. Daughter, thine shall be more illustrious, combating even invisible enemies, who, as traitors, are the more dangerous, and their confusion shall be the greater when vanquished, and the victory over them the more glorious." *

But, according to the saints, the greatest mortification of the religious is obedience to the rule. Mother de Matel left this example to her daughters. Far from complaining of the rigors of obedience, she showed herself eager for it, and she excited the zeal of her directors to keep her under the sacrificial knife : "My dear Father, continue, I pray you, to cultivate the vineyard of the heavenly Noah, who seems to inebriate Himself with the wine which the press of His Love causes to boil in, and flow from, my heart, so long as it continues to free itself from self-love. . . . Continue, then, in these thoughts, and, especially, in these acts. Be zealous to prune whatever is superfluous, even though nature should complain ; this is natural to the vine, for the divine Sun, by His heat, dries my tears, as He does those of the vine after the pruning knife of the gardener. Bind me, as you think

* Letters to Father Jacquinot.

best, to the holy wood of obedience; for what you bind shall be bound, and what you loose shall be loosed. I promise it again, and, by the help of my Spouse, will keep my promise. I would that it might be even to the death of my imperfections, but I will say even to the separation of soul and body." *

"Whenever," she writes to one of her directors, "your Reverence addresses to me these, or similar, words: 'Do what you will,' it gives me so great a pain of mind, and even of body, that if I could make you feel it yourself, I think that you would never leave me to my own will, unless it were the same as your own, which I take to be the will of God." *

"I beseech you," she writes again, "to leave no imperfection of mine without its reprehension; for all that takes place in me is imperfection. And you, my dear Father, taking the place of my Jesus, must scan them seriously, with the eye of the physician, since He has given you knowledge of me; assume the part of the apothecary and make me take the medicine that I need, however bitter. And, if pride, or some other tumor, swell my heart, or if my mind be lifted up, use the lancet, a sign or a glance of your eye indicating my disease. I wish so to be bound that I may not draw back when you come to do as I request, and as God commands, since His desires are commands to those who love Him."

And yet this complete obedience, it is needless to remark, was not without sacrifice. What struggles, what anguish, what hesitations, disturbed like waves the surface of that soul, which was, in its depths, so resigned and submissive! And how the Lord loved to show Himself sensible of the generosity of His Spouse, and of her efforts! One day, after many tears and

* Letters to Father de Meaux.

much anguish, she had resigned herself to being deprived of her Communion by her confessor, and tried to repair the loss by a spiritual Communion : "Daughter," said Our Lord to her, "behold Me here as I was with St. Matthew ; all My saints are with Me, make us a great feast."—"Then, my dear Love," said Jeanne, perceiving His meaning, "behold me ready to be transformed, even to be transubstantiated into Thee."—"Then," she continues, "I was in the midst of delights with all the Heavenly Court, and my King the High Priest, who rose up amongst them, saying : 'I have a bread to eat which thou knowest not ; it is with thee, My daughter.'—'What is that, My beloved ?'—'Thou must do the will of My Father.'—'I am ready.'—Having said this, I felt as though I had become a sacrificial feast, made by the High Priest, Jesus Christ, of which He and all the saints partook."—"In these colloquies," she says, "He was present to me in a mental vision, as an open heart, in which was a crucifix formed of the substance of the heart, or, rather, changing the heart into itself, leaving only an exterior covering to the crucifix. Some one, whom I did not see, held Him in his hands. He seemed to say to me : 'Knowest thou this heart ?'—'I am not certain.'—'So one has to be.'—'I am willing.'—'It is I, my beloved. Love and obedience have always crucified My Heart.'" *

Love and obedience were the crucifixion of Mother de Matel.

* Letters to Father de Meaux.

CHAPTER XII.

THE POWER OF HER INTERCESSION.

When a soul has risen to an eminent degree of virtue, God usually consecrates it by exterior signs of sanctity. He gives to it a grace of intercession, which, in a greater or less measure, associates it with His power.

The life of Mother de Matel proves that she certainly possessed this privilege. In this chapter we shall bring together facts that make the proof evident.

Father Ignatius, as we have seen, had shown Jeanne every attention whilst she stopped for a few days at Orleans on her first journey to Paris. The good father received his reward. He had held with her long and daily conversations on spiritual things, and was never tired of admiring the favors with which she had been graced. He finally said to her : "Daughter, you are, I think, the one creature in the world whom God most favors. Since I have spoken with you I have been freed from a spiritual trouble that has made me gray-haired, young as I am. Neither retreats, nor mortifications, interior and exterior, had brought me any relief. I admire that purity with which God has endowed you, which is transfused into those who treat with you." *

Father Ignatius died some months later, in perfect peace, and with a heart burning with the divine love which he had inspired in his interviews with Jeanne de Matel.

* Autobiography.

The Reverend Fathers Pontian and de Meaux had been despaired of by the physicians ; Jeanne declared that God's decree was only conditional, and by her prayers had it suspended. The two religious always held themselves indebted to her powerful intercession for the recovery of their health.

When she had learned by private revelation the approaching death of Monseigneur Miron, Archbishop of Lyons, she was urged by M. de Neuville to obtain of Our Lord the succession for Monseigneur Alphonse de Richelieu, then Archbishop of Aix. She was assured that her prayer was granted ; this was indeed the case, but the obstacles interposed by this prelate to the establishment of the Order verified the additional words of Our Lord to her : "Thou shalt be like the daughter of Jephtah, destined for sacrifice."

The two children of M. de Serviére, who was ambassador to Piedmont under Louis XIV., were dangerously ill. Jeanne, moved by the tears of the father, asked and obtained their recovery. On several occasions M. de Serviére attested that he was indebted to the holy woman for the lives of his children.

On the feast of St. Clement, 1629, she says : "I was praying Thee for our Holy Father the Pope, Urban VIII., and Thou didst communicate to me the pleasure that he gave Thee in the establishment of Thy Order, assuring me that he would favor and approve it. Taking confidence from Thy goodness, I prayed that His life might be prolonged for fifteen years for the greater increase of his merits, and Thou didst not refuse me." *

Her certainty on this point was so great that during this period she never failed to protest against the rumors that the pious Pontiff was about to die.

* Autobiography.

In 1663, Reverend Father Millien, a Jesuit of the house in Lyons, was taken ill, and was soon at the point of death. They had already selected the spot for his burial. Jeanne knew him well, for he had taken a special interest in the Order. She betook herself to prayer, and entreated Our Lord to leave him yet awhile in the world, representing that so he could increase his merits. "Thou gavest me," she says, "a foretaste of the glory prepared for him. I said I did not doubt of the happiness destined for him, but that Thy Providence could preserve it for him after the few years that I requested for him, that he might serve Thee. Thou didst grant my request, for which I thank Thee, O my divine Savior." *

As long as he lived Father Millien proclaimed himself indebted to Jeanne's prayers for his recovery, and his brethren partook of his conviction.

Mother de Matel had often assured the Chancellor, M. de Séguier, that the Incarnate Word would reward him for the protection he had extended to the Order by protecting him in turn. During the civil war he had occasion to verify this promise, and to experience in pressing danger the power of Jeanne's intercession with God. The people, having revolted, and, being instigated by malicious persons, had rushed in pursuit of him. As he passed the Hotel de Ville, Séguier sought refuge within, and hid himself as best he could. The maddened crowd followed him, seeking him everywhere. Shrinking behind a partition of old boards imperfectly joined, the fugitive could see every movement of his enemies, and hear their threats. He remembered the words of Mother de Matel, and, recalling the good he had done to the Order, he invoked the Incarnate Word, and escaped uninjured.

* Autobiography.

The following fact is related by one of the most ancient of the historians of Mother de Matel : " M. de la Piardiére, with whom Mother de Matel and her Community lodged during the war, had confided to her care his only daughter when he left to take possession of his abbey. This mark of confidence had excited the jealousy of his sister-in-law, and she lost no occasion of manifesting it. She gave proof of it on the first day of the year 1653. The sacristan, having forgotten to provide wine for the Mass, applied to this lady, who resided in the same house ; she was humbly requested to come to their assistance on this one occasion only. She sent word by the cook that she only had some of de Condrieux, which she was reserving for the Epiphany. Mother de Matel was sensibly hurt when she heard the incident, because there was question of the service of God. Still, she did not allow the lady to perceive it, and, providing herself elsewhere, was content to pray for her.

" On the eve of the Epiphany, when they tapped the barrel of wine in preparation for the feast. it was found as dry as though it had never been filled. The servant who kept the keys of the cellar was very much alarmed : the lady had thought that she could have every confidence in her servant, who had been brought up in the family of M. de la Piardiére, being the daughter of one of his farmers.

" The poor girl, who was eighteen years of age, was inconsolable, and her tears ceased not to flow, which did not prevent her being accused of having drunk the wine with the help of her friends. The suspicion so worked upon her that she fell dangerously ill. She received the last sacraments, and, when she had communicated, again assured her mistress of her innocence, saying that in her then sad state she ought to be believed. The lady, entering into herself,

reflected that God, perhaps, had wished to punish her for having refused that wine for the sacrifice of the Mass. The thought softened her heart, and she ceased troubling the poor girl, whom Mother de Matel frequently visited, exhorting her to patience, and exhibiting great compassion for her. Being restored to health, the servant declared that she owed it and her justification to the prayers of Mother de Matel, who had always assured her that God would make known her innocence if she bore her cross patiently, and had confidence in Him."

The following incident transpired in the last years that Mother de Matel passed in Roanne. There was in that city a child that was blind from its birth. In 1625, its mother, encouraged by the reputation that Jeanne had acquired by her contemplative life, brought it to her. Moved by the mother's grief, the pious friend of the Incarnate Word took from her bosom a silver reliquary containing relics of St. Ignatius and St. Theresa, recommending her to touch with it the eyes of the child for nine days consecutively, and promising to remember it in her prayers.

Two days afterwards the eyes of the child were opened to the light. The happy mother everywhere proclaimed her gratitude. The evil had been well known, the cure was easily verified. The precious reliquary, together with an appeal to Jeanne's prayers, soon became a remedy which was sought for every need. Mothers, especially in dangerous childbirths, owed to it a happy delivery. Indeed, it was unheard of that anyone having recourse to such protection had failed to experience a speedy and complete relief. Popular gratitude did not mistake the source of these graces, and the use of the reliquary was regarded as only one of those pious stratagems employed by the saints to screen their humility. We know how in our

own times the venerable Curé of Ars used to attribute to St. Philomena the favors which God granted to his intercession.

It would seem as though Mother de Matel owed to the protection to which she herself was indebted at her birth this special gift which the pious mothers of Roanne attributed to her. We shall cite one other example: Madame Catherine de Lormiére, daughter of Madame de Briolai, could not, according to Mother de Belly, preserve any of her children at their birth. Being on the point of again becoming a mother, she went with Madame de Briolai to recommend herself to the prayers of our foundress. As soon as the grate of the cloister was opened, they threw themselves on their knees, entreating her to bless the child expected in the family as a hope and a consolation, that God might be pleased to preserve it. Our Reverend Mother held off for a time, but her humility was obliged finally to yield. She gave the required benediction and promised to pray for the mother and the child. Madame de Lormiére attributed to her prayers, not only the birth and conservation of her son, but also that of three other children with whom God blessed her marriage.

The following anecdote may excite a smile, and may be regarded as only a happy coincidence. Still we shall preserve it; the simple faith of which it is the evidence will edify those souls who know how good Providence is to the saints in little things as in great:

"On the day before the eve of St. Michael, 1648," says Mother de Matel, "the Sister who cooked for the house had so great and inflamed a swelling in the eye that she was obliged to keep her bed. On the feast of St. Michael, as I did not think of praying to him, nor yet to St. Raphael, for the relief of the poor Sister, she determined to complain so loudly all the night

long that the compassion which I always have for my daughters would oblige me to intercede for her. Towards four o'clock in the morning I changed my mind, saying to this holy angel, who is called the *Remedy of God:* 'The Sister has prevented me from sleeping till now; I beg of you to relieve her that she may sleep, and so may I.' At once the Heavenly Physician pierced the tumor, and that so happily that the surgeon, coming towards seven or eight o'clock to lance the swelling, found it so well opened that he had no need to touch it. A few days later, he asked me whether I wished him to apply the cautery to the sore which the Sister had had in the eye since her childhood, that is, nearly all her life, a consequence of the small pox. She was afraid that she would have to suffer greatly, but, strange to say, when the surgeon applied it she did not feel it." *

A celebrated fact, which caused a great sensation in the religious world at Paris, was the cure of Lucretia de Belly, whom we have seen attaching herself to Jeanne at the time of the foundation at Avignon. From Grenoble, whither she had been sent, she was summoned to Paris, just before the blockade of 1649, to take the religious habit; she was then dangerously ill. When the sisters returned to the convent, after peace had been declared, two of them had to remain at M. de Rossignol's to nurse her. It was a continuous fever, with paroxysms, accompanied by a fluxion of the chest. She was reduced to a skeleton; the bones pierced the skin in some places, and the surgeon was afraid to open a vein lest she should expire. M. de la Chambre, physician to the King, and M. Felix, her doctors, after having exhausted all their remedies, finally said, on consultation, that she could not live.

* Autobiography.

"Towards the middle of May, the Sisters who nursed her, seeing that she had lost consciousness and could not move, thought her dead; they gave notice to the convent at Faubourg St. Germain, and asked for a winding sheet in which to bury her. M. de la Chambre, meeting M. de Priézac, a counsellor of state, and one of Jeanne's friends, told him that there was no more hope for Sister de Belly, and that Mother de Matel should be told as soon as possible.

"They took a carriage, and went to seek her in the church of the discalced Augustinians, where she was praying. M. de Priézac accosted her, and, with an air of the greatest sympathy, announced the painful news. The foundress did not seem moved, but calmly said: 'I have no doubt that, according to the rules of Hippocrates, my daughter de Belly can not live, as you say, but I have still hopes that she will not die of this sickness.'—'What!' said M. de Priézac, 'will the incomparable,'—so he always named Jeanne, resist the will of God, Who, according to appearances, and the judgment of physicians, calls this daughter to Himself?'—'I promised Him,' she answered, 'and her parents, that I would give her the habit of the Incarnate Word. I venture to say that the love of the divine King will not contradict me, and that He will leave her to me. I will not cease weeping at His feet till He has cured my daughter.' Mother de Matel kept her promise; for three days and nights she never stopped praying and weeping.

"Sister de Belly finally recovered the use of her senses; she no longer suffered from fever, and was able to walk. People flocked to see her through curiosity. M. de la Chambre, better than any other, understood the wonder of this speedy cure, and called her the resuscitated. She would no longer defer her

return to the convent; Mother de Matel conducted her there, and, at the end of May, conferred on her the habit. M. de la Chambre assisted at the ceremony, and in the presence of Madame, the Chancellor's wife, and that of the Marshal de Toussi, and the Marchioness de Royant, said: 'Observe well that Sister; she is a dead person resuscitated, in the last fifteen days, by the prayers of Mother de Matel.'" *—"He was inconceivably surprised," says Jeanne, "to hear the voice of the sister, admiring alike the physical vigor and the presence of mind that appeared in her during the ceremony, which in the Order is a long one, but one that is so beautiful and symbolical that it does not tire. It was Thy Holy Spirit that dictated it, Divine Love."†

"The Abbé Saint Just, one of the greatest defenders of Mother de Matel at Lyons, who had often spoken of her as a soul very high in the knowledge of spiritual things, had come to Paris a little before the civil war. The curate of Saint Sulpice was his intimate friend. He called on him soon after his arrival. He found with him that assembly of jealous souls of whom we have spoken, and he joined the conference. They were discussing Mother de Matel, and they criticised her in such a way that he allowed himself to be ensnared, and consented to become the severe censor of one who had always had in him a filial confidence.

"God punished him for his presumption, for soon after he fell ill of an unremittent fever. He grew weaker day by day, and the doctors so far despaired of him as to say that he could not recover but by a miracle. He was told that it was time to prepare for death. Then it was that he bethought him that he had sympathized with the enemies of Mother de

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

† Autobiography.

Matel ; he bitterly reproached himself for his pusillanimity, and became at once convinced that his illness was the punishment sent to him therefor. These thoughts caused him great anxiety. To free his mind, he dispatched one of his friends to call on Mother de Matel for him, to make known the state in which he was, to recommend him to her prayers, and to say how much he desired the consolation of speaking to her once more before he died.

"The commission was punctually performed. The Mother Foundress, who was then with her daughters at M. de la Piardiére's, answered the messenger : 'Although I observe the cloister of the house, as there is question of satisfying my Father Director, (so she called the Abbé Saint Just), I will leave my retreat. If God in His goodness answers the prayers that I have offered up in his behalf, he will not die of this malady, and I will yet see him Grand Vicar of Lyons.'

"So, accompanied by Sister Gravier, she went to see the Abbé de Saint Just. She found M. de Priézac in the room, who said to her : 'Mother, he is very low, and they think that he will soon expire.' Mother de Matel replied : 'I am confident that he will not die of this sickness.' Then, approaching the sick man, she said aloud : 'Courage, Reverend Sir ; I hope that you will not die of this sickness, though it has brought you to the last gasp. Promise the Incarnate Word that you will protect His house in your city of Lyons, and that you will free your mind of all that displeases His divine Majesty."

"The Abbé, returning suddenly to himself, said, with a strong voice : 'Yes, Mother, I do so promise, if God permits me to recover.' At the same time he excused himself to her, with great sorrow, for his imprudence in joining the faction that had opposed

her. Mother de Matel then said: 'I assure you that I have never had the least resentment either against you or against those who are working against me. Think only of regaining your strength, so as to devote your life the sooner to the glory of God in Lyons.'

"From that happy moment the Abbé de Saint Just was entirely freed from suffering. This sudden change caused as much surprise as joy at the Hotel de Villeroy. * The grateful Abbé did not fail to make known everywhere that, after God, he owed his life to Mother de Matel, and he once more became her most zealous defender and the most sincere admirer of her virtues." †

One of the cures that caused Mother de Matel the most exertion was that of the little daughter of M. de la Piardiére. This little one had accompanied Mother de Matel on her second return to Lyons. Scarcely six years of age, she fell dangerously ill; a malignant fever and the smallpox, by which she was attacked, were complicated with other symptoms, so that the physicians despaired of saving her. Jeanne was in desolation; the maternal relatives of the child had been displeased by her removal from Paris, with the long journey, and had openly denounced the decision of M. de la Piardiére as a great imprudence. A miracle was needed; she asked it with floods of tears, incessant prayers, and she obtained it. The sick child regained her health; the grievous consequences that remained after her sufferings also disappeared, in such a way as to be deemed miraculous.

Many other surprising cures are related as due to the prayers of Mother de Matel. At Lyons, the niece

* The Abbé de Saint Just was the brother of M. de Villeroy, who had been Archbishop of Lyons.

† Life by a Jesuit Father.

of M. Deville had the falling sickness; she cured her by applying to her head the image of the Blessed Virgin and the Gospel of St. John. In 1643, Sister Gravier, falling from a scaffolding, incurred such a fracture of the skull that, on account of the lateness of the hour, the surgeon, contenting himself with provisional remedies, announced that he would return in the morning to perform the operation of trepanning. Jeanne first put herself in prayer, and then, coming to the sick sister, said: "Courage, my daughter, you will not undergo an operation, and you will recover." Then she placed her hand on the head, and the patient at once said: "Mother, I no longer feel any pain." When the surgeon came in the morning, he found that he was not needed, and he declared that the cure was effected by a miracle.

In 1646, a gardener of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, named Michel Le Mirre, was in a desperate condition; he had received all the sacraments and was despaired of by the physicians. Not being able to make up his mind to die, he said to his wife: "Ah, if Mother de Matel would only come to see me, I should be cured." His words were reported to Jeanne, and she was asked to give the poor man satisfaction. She consented, but with difficulty, as she would have to leave the cloister. Arrived at the house of the gardener, she said to the dying man: "Well, my friend, are you not resigned to the will of God?" "Yes, mother," said he, "but I have so many children who are not established, and so many affairs to arrange, that I should not like to die just now. Pray God for me, and bless me." This Mother de Matel did, and the pains at once ceased. "I hope," said she, on withdrawing, "that you will live long enough to settle your children. Bring them up in the fear and love of God." Michel Le Mirre continued in

robust health until the time which he himself had assigned to Mother de Matel.

Mother Mary of the Holy Ghost Nallard had a tumor on her knee, which her spirit of mortification induced her to conceal. In the month of August, 1648, the evil developed so much, and the inflammation was so great, that she could no longer keep silence. The surgeon who was called in found the case a very grave one, and, recognizing the danger of mortification, declared that an operation was necessary.

Mother de Belly relates that "Mother Nallard, addressing the foundress in presence of the surgeon, said: 'I have such confidence in your prayers that I believe that God will cure me if you ask Him.' Our mother, who suffered in her heart all the pains of her daughters, promised. The surgeon, who was named Prioult, also begged her prayers, for he feared to operate.

"On the day fixed for the operation, our venerable foundress communicated, and made all her daughters do likewise, to ask of God that He Himself would guide the hand of the surgeon. When the latter was about to commence the operation, our Mother Foundress said: 'How long do you think it will take before the patient is cured?'—'It will be well if she be able to walk in six months.'—'If Our Lord grant her the grace to go to Mass on the approaching Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, what would you say?'—'It would be an evident miracle, for, according to the rules of surgery, it would be impossible.'

"The surgeon made an incision in the form of a cross. The overture was so large and deep that a small loaf of bread could have been inclosed in it. And yet, on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, our dear Mother Nallard had the happiness of

communicating with our Reverend Mother Foundress and the Community, the Communion being offered up in thanksgiving for the cure effected. The good mother was completely restored, and felt no more inconvenience or weakness, though she remained kneeling in prayer for several hours. She openly declared that for her life and health she was indebted to our worthy Mother Institutrix, and the surgeon published everywhere her great credit with God."

Mother de Belly adds that God wished M. Prioult himself to experience the effects of our venerable mother's prayers.

"Two years after the cure of Mother Nallard, the good doctor was seized by a severe unremittent fever, with paroxysms, inflammation, an oppression of the chest and pleurisy. He was abandoned by the physicians, who, despairing of his life, had the last sacraments administered to him. In this extremity he remembered the credit that our worthy mother had with God, and sent to ask her prayers that he might be cured; this, of her charity, she did, knowing how necessary the good doctor was to his family. Heaven heard her prayers, and in a short time M. Prioult recovered. He came, with his wife and children, to return thanks to our Mother Foundress, whom ever after he revered as a saint."

The following is the account of another cure, taken from the same authentic source, and attributed to the intercession of Mother de Matel.

It was in 1669, the year that preceded that of her death: "The Reverend Father Le Blanc, Abbé, and General of the Reverend Fathers of Sainte Geneviéve, canon regular of St. Augustine, having fallen sick, was in danger of death. His great age gave his physicians little hope of his recovery, and they abandoned the

case. In this state the good Abbé thought only of preparing for the death to which he was approaching, when he felt inspired to make his extremity known to the Reverend Mother Institutrix, in whom he had special confidence. He sent two of his religious to beg her, in his name, to recommend him to our Lord. She promised them to make a novena, which she would begin, adding the hope that she entertained that, in the goodness of God, the Reverend Father would not succumb to that malady.

"Shortly after, he himself came to thank her for her prayers, to which he attributed his recovery. He survived our worthy mother more than four years."

The following lines reveal a whole series of graces obtained by a pious practice, in which can be seen the eucharistic soul of Mother de Matel: "When there were any sick in our Convent of Paris, who found themselves in danger of death, our worthy mother had recourse to the heavenly Physician, received Him in Holy Communion, and then bore Him at once in her bosom to our dying sisters, beside whose bed she would make her thanksgiving. She would ask their cure with so great confidence in her divine Love that He accorded it, and, of those for whom she thus prayed, not one died.

When they recommended to her other sick persons, despaired of by the physicians, she would ask St. Raphael to visit them for her and cure them. If, when praying for their recovery, she could not weep before her divine Spouse, it was a proof that God willed to take them from this world. Then she would say to the Sisters: "Pray for such, or such a one, for Our Lord will not hear me." It was an augury of their death. *

* Extract from the *Critiques* of Mother de Belly.

In many instances the prayers of Jeanne procured the deliverance of energumens and of those obsessed by the devil. The famous Father Surin, of the Society of Jesus, whose merit and strange trials are so well known, testified in many letters that he wrote from Bordeaux to Mother de Matel, in whom he had a particular confidence, that he attributed to her intercession with God the tranquillity that he then enjoyed.

But, a more astonishing prodigy, attested by a number of witnesses, occurred at Lyons in 1635. A little child, nine years old, the son of Madame Soleil, had been dead for several hours, and was about to be buried. Jeanne, who was well acquainted with the afflicted mother, came to visit and console her. After a long interview, she approached the corpse, and, calling the child by name, invited him to come and dry the tears of his mother. He at once rose up in full life and health. They immediately raised the cry of miracle, and Mother de Matel in vain commanded silence. The fact became public.

After her death the same favors continued to attest her power with God.

A young lady of the Faubourg St. Germain, named Dubos, for two or three years had been suffering from a disease that was gradually consuming her, and leading her to the grave. She had in vain had recourse to remedies and prayers; the malady only increased. When she heard of the death of Mother de Matel, whose virtue she well knew, she felt herself strongly inspired to ask for some object which had been used by her, and to make a novena in her honor. They gave her one of her neckerchiefs, which she put on with great respect. She had worn it but a few hours when she felt herself entirely cured.

The same thing happened to another person, who had lost her sight. She had recourse to the same remedy, and was at once relieved.

An only daughter of M. Bignon, the Advocate General, about fifteen years of age, was attacked so violently by small-pox, that, notwithstanding the skill of the best physicians, there was no hope of saving her. One of the chaplains of His Royal Highness, the brother of the King, Abbé Sigouin, de Sisteron, happened to be calling on M. Bignon for some business affair. He became acquainted with the family affliction, and, as he had very well known Mother de Matel, he thought of recommending the sick child to her, and that very day she was somewhat better. When, the next day, he called to hear how she was, he related his act of confidence. The whole family then joined their prayers to those of Abbé Sigouin, and on that same day Miss Bignon was restored to perfect health.

The Viscountess de Marcilly had been led to the brink of the grave by a hemorrhage which science had combatted in vain. She sent to ask Mother de Belly to make a novena for her in honor of the pious foundress. Mother de Belly and Sister of the Blessed Sacrament Alouis began it, and promised in the name of the sick woman that, in case she were cured, she would in thanksgiving make a pilgrimage to the tomb of their mother. The cure was at once effected, and two days later Madame de Marcilly came to fulfill the promise made in her name.

A woman named Nicole Mille had her face swollen and full of pain in consequence of erysipelas that had attacked that part. The evil had lasted three months. Having learned that they were digging a grave in the house of the Incarnate Word at Paris, then occupied

by the Benedictines, for a religious of that Order, and that, in the course of the excavation, the coffin of Mother de Matel would be exposed, she besought them to allow her to see and touch the remains of the venerable foundress. She was confident that she would thus obtain relief. Her hope was realized.

The memoirs of Mother de Belly tell us that, "in conformity with the desires of Madame Mille, the sexton broke off half of a little plank forming part of the coffin of our Mother de Matel. One of the persons present, Marie Béche, touched the leg of the corpse, which did not appear to her to be deprived of the flesh, though fourteen years had elapsed since her burial. No disagreeable odor was exhaled, and she was still clothed in the habit of the Order. Her robe was a little rusted, and her red scapular blackened at one end, next to the wall, where, in bad weather, there was such an accumulation of water that it had to be bailed out.

"Madame Mille having returned thanks to God for the cure just obtained through the intercession of Mother de Matel, the plank was restored to its place, and the sexton cast some earth upon the coffin of our illustrious mother."

In 1703, Sister of the Blessed Sacrament Alouis, of whom we lately made mention, the same who, in the investiture and profession of Mother de Matel, had the honor of imposing upon her the veil of the Lord's spouse, felt herself attacked by an intolerable pain in the side. She could not, as she says in an attestation which she has left of the cure, "make any movement, kneel, kiss the ground, cough, breathe or sneeze without great suffering." She felt herself inspired to have recourse to the intercession of the holy foundress. Going to the oratory where the heart was preserved, she made an act of reparation for all the faults she had

ever committed against her, and prayed her to obtain her cure of the Incarnate Word. She daily renewed this pious practice for nine days. "On the last day of the novena," she says, "I still felt the pain, but my hope and confidence were strengthened. As I was reading in my cell, after having said my beads, I felt, about one o'clock, a slight movement in my side, and then I heard an interior, but very distinct voice, that said: 'You do not think yourself cured.' With that I arose and made all those movements that were before so painful to me, and, feeling nothing more of the pain, I thanked the Lord, and our good mother who had prayed for me."

The author may be permitted to insert here the testimony of his personal gratitude.

In the month of October, 1882, a young girl, in spite of the most solicitous affection, was brought to the doors of the tomb. Her father, a skillful physician, thought the situation so grave that he sent in the middle of the night for the last succors of religion. This was the state of things when, in the morning, in answer to the call of friendship that summoned me to that bedside, I felt myself inspired to appeal to Mother de Matel, whose Life was then in press, and of whom a relic, by a remarkable coincidence, was then in possession of the sick maiden. All along the way I conjured her, and her daughters received to glory, to intercede for the life of the child, and I promised, in case our prayers were heard, to recommend to Christian piety the following invocation: *Mater Immaculata, Mater Verbi Incarnati viventis in Eucharistia, ora pro nobis.* * The cure would be as a consecration of the formula. On the same day there was

* Mary Immaculate, Mother of the Incarnate Word, dwelling in the Blessed Sacrament, pray for us.

visible improvement, and on the following day the situation, so lately reputed grave in the extreme, continued to change to a state of perfect health.

The prayers of Mother de Matel, so frequently powerful for the good of those who had recourse to them, were not less efficacious in those dangers that concerned the people and the state. The chapter in which we shall show her relations with the royal house of France will afford us many such examples. We give a striking one here :

"The fires of civil war having broken out afresh in 1651, disorders increased daily in Paris. Monseigneur de l'Estrade, Bishop of Condom, a particular friend of Mother de Matel, found himself shut up in the unfortunate capital. A witness to the horrible excesses of the seditious, his only consolation was a visit to the Hotel Piardiére—the temporary convent of the Incarnate Word—to weep with the foundress over the evils of which he gave her the description. The revolted people had already set fire to the Hotel de Ville. The streets were full of armed men, who accounted the most horrid murders as glorious feats of arms. The houses of the great were often insulted, and M. Séguier, the Chancellor, ever loyal to the government, had the greatest difficulty in escaping from the public fury.

"Finally, the army of the Prince de Condé was encamped near the gate Saint Antoine, and prepared for the assault. M. de Condom came to warn Mother de Matel, and to depict the universal consternation which this last circumstance caused to good citizens.—"If you do not hasten," he said, "to disarm heaven by your prayers, the fatal day that threatens us will be the ruin of France." More sensible than any other to the misfortunes of her country, Mother de Matel

resolved to do gentle violence to the Lord to avert so deplorable a calamity.

"On the day fixed for the assault, July 2, 1652, she assembled her daughters in the morning and exhorted them to redouble their prayers for peace ; she forbade them for any reason whatsoever to interrupt her in the prayers in which she was about to engage to the same end. At eight o'clock in the morning she entered the chapel, and remained there prostrate until ten o'clock at night, without once changing her position. Her religious, fearing for her health, thought themselves absolved from further obedience to her order, and approached to oblige her to partake of some food and repose. Her handkerchief and dress were wet with her tears. They tried to lift her to her feet, but she could no longer walk, and they were obliged to carry her to her room and to put her to bed." *

This is what took place during that long supplication : Jeanne had seen "by an intellectual light, the Mother of Beautiful Love, as though about to quit Paris, carrying with her the child of Love, and Love Himself." † Then it was that she cast herself on the ground as if to arrest His flight, and entered into the greatest desolation. The struggle was long, but at last Jeanne triumphed, and Mary gave her, as to the city and the religious, assurances that were justified in the future.

"The next day Monseigneur de Condom came to visit her as usual ; he was much surprised to find her indisposed, and inquired the cause. Mother de Matel, with great simplicity, gave him an account of what had occurred the day before. 'The Prince de Condé

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

† Autobiography.

will not die in this war ; I have prayed for him, and God has revealed to me that he will return to the obedience that he owes to the King. The Sovereign Goodness has listened favorably to the proposals of peace that I have ventured to make, and I venture to say that you will soon see the effect of the promises with which he has honored my constancy.' The prelate replied : 'I hope, my daughter, that your confidence may not be deceived, but I must tell you that for the present there is no appearance of peace ; on the contrary, everything seems to announce a long war. Therefore, I entreat you by fervent prayers to try to arrest the wrath of heaven, which seems more and more incensed against us.'

"The prelate spoke in this way because he was instructed of the bad way in which things stood. The streets of Paris presented nothing but scenes of horror. In the midst of an infuriated people one could see but heaps of dead and dying men, who had been killed or wounded at the combat of the gate of St. Antoine, where the Prince of Condé had run the risk of losing his life. And yet, but two days later, against all hope, the deputies of the city and the envoys of the Court met in conference at St. Germain-en-Laye, and concluded a peace. The news was astounding to the Parisians, and it was publicly said : 'Some holy soul has obtained this miracle, for it is not natural that a war of such a nature, and so obstinate in spirit, should end so abruptly.'

"Monseigneur de Condom encouraged this thought by making known to everyone whom he met the debt which the public owed to Mother de Matel. The event impressed still more deeply in the soul of the prelate the esteem with which he had ever regarded the illustrious servant of God. Thenceforward he

never failed to consult her in all his affairs, and followed her advice with blind submission." *

Since we are establishing by facts how near Jeanne was to God's heart, we must not forget the penalties with which he often visited her persecutors. Some there were who beheld with pain the veneration in which she was held by M. de la Piardiére, and the influence that she exercised on his spirit and piety. They made every effort to detach him from the little Community of Paris, and from its foundress. One of them, a priest, so far forgot himself as to tell him that the Church was not governed by the distaff. He was almost at once taken dangerously ill, lost consciousness, and died without the sacraments, after four or five days, in which so great was his delirium that they were obliged to keep him bound. Three others, in whom nothing presaged an early end, died in the year succeeding their unjust opposition, and many were forced to renounce the charges and dignities which they had suddenly become unable to fulfill.

In the next book we shall see the hand of God bearing heavily on other persecutors of His servant and enemies of her work. And thus becomes justified the saying of Mother de Belly, "that it was sufficient to love and oblige Mother de Matel to be enriched with graces, but that those who caused her suffering were always visibly punished."

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

CHAPTER XIII.

HER SPIRIT OF PROPHECY.

The supernatual knowledge of the future is another of the marks of holiness. Jeanne de Matel had her brow adorned by this aureole.

A singular circumstance assures to the different predictions of Mother de Matel the guarantee of incontestable authenticity. They form a part of the writings of the illustrious contemplative; now, amongst the facts and visions which she recounts, many are several times related, and at different dates. Her papers were read by a number of persons; frequently, those to whom they were communicated confiding them to others, they ended by remaining in the possession of hands that were piously indiscreet. "When I came to Paris, in 1632," says Mother de Matel, "I found much to say. When I returned to Avignon, towards the close of April, 1640, Sister Francoise Gravier wept because they had abstracted some of my papers. As for myself, they were a subject of much indifference, as they still are." *

Under such conditions, how are we to distinguish authentic predictions from such as might have been made after the event? When, for example, Mother de Matel, in her Life, written by order of Cardinal Richelieu, recounts her visions on the triumphs of Louis XIII., her predictions on the birth of Louis XIV., the assurances she had received on certain details concerning the establishment of her Order, the Fathers Jacquinot, Voisin, de Meaux, Gibalin and

* Autobiography.

other trustworthy persons, whose testimony she invokes, and whose names are mentioned in her writings, were still living. The manuscript of her first confidences was, perhaps, still in their possession, but in any case they could not have forgotten the substance of facts of so great importance. And yet, not only did they not protest, nor withdraw their confidence from Mother de Matel, but, on the contrary, when occasion offered for explanation, they rendered full homage to her sincerity.

We will not speak of Jeanne's predictions concerning the birth of the Order. Her whole life is a proof that she received frequent revelations on the subject, that she knew beforehand the greater part of the difficulties, and that she had a prophetic certainty of the final triumph. Let us give here a certain number of particular facts.

Some time before her first journey to Paris, Mother de Matel, having occasion to write to Rev. Father Benoit, priest of the Oratory, declared that, when she should go there, there would be a great commotion, "somewhat similar to that caused by our Lord on entering the temple of Jerusalem." * This prediction is found recalled in the Life written for Cardinal Richelieu. Father Benoit was then at Lyons, and Jeanne appeals to his testimony. And this annunciation of an event so improbable, at a time when the infant Order was hiding in a suburb of Lyons, was fully realized ; our readers will grant this when they recall the agitation that was excited around Jeanne at the instigation of Mlle. de Sainte-Beuve, as we have related.

Towards 1630 or 1631, M. de Nesme, a theologian of Aix, who had followed Cardinal Richelieu to

* Autobiography.

Lyons, came to announce to Jeanne that "the prelate would soon be Archbishop of Paris, partly because of his power in France, partly because the Archbishop of Paris was very unwell, and that he could not live." "He will live longer than you think," said Mother de Matel, "and so will the Pope. The Incarnate Word, Who has the keys of life, will prolong their days as for Ezechias."

"M. de Nesme is still living," says Jeanne, in the chapter in which she records the fact; "he can testify to my assurances, and how, when he often came to tell me the Pope is about to die, I would say: 'Reverend Sir, I do not believe it; he can make many Cardinals without fear of dying. That which is said of his horoscope, that he will die suddenly (it was then a common report), will not prove true.' These same things I said to Reverend Father Gibalin many times during the year 1633. He is still alive to witness to this truth as well as to many others." * Pope Urban VIII. in fact, did not die until 1644, and the Archbishop of Paris in 1654. Jeanne was equally explicit concerning the elevation of de Séguier. Before her departure for Paris, in the month of November, 1632, she saw Our Lord giving him the seal of State. On arriving at Lyons, at the close of the same month, she recounted this vision to Father Gibalin: "I told him that Thy Majesty wished to make Séguier Grand Chancellor of France. He answered: 'Daughter, the Chancellor is not dead, and the office is for life.'— 'Father,' I replied, 'I know nothing about such offices, but this is what I understood from Our Lord, who showed me the seals.'

"In the month of February, 1633, Father Gibalin came to see me, and said: 'Mother, M. Séguier is

* Autobiography.

guardian of the seals, but he is not Chancellor, the offices are distinct.'—'Father, I saw them united in his person. Our Lord has always accomplished what He has said to me; you will see His words verified, I have no doubt.'" It all happened as she had predicted.

This dignity was often disputed to Séguier, and twice his enemies succeeded in depriving him of it: "Be not grieved," said Mother de Matel to the Chancellor's wife, who had come to announce the misfortune. "The Incarnate Word wishes to try his virtue and yours, but the seals will be restored to him never to be taken away again." Very soon after, in fact, the King rendered homage to the fidelity of his magistrate, and restored him to his dignity. When, twenty years after, finding himself dangerously sick, Séguier had the seals conveyed to him with his thanks for the great honor that he had constantly shown to him, Louis XIV. refused to receive them, or to dispose of the office until God had called him to Himself.

We give one more example of the gift of prophecy accorded to Mother de Matel; it is contained in the Life, written by herself.

"M. de Bousquet came one morning to say Mass for us; I saw on the paten a cloud in which were agreeably blended blue and white. I then comprehended that Thou wouldst elevate him to a dignity which he did not then have. Some time after, Thou didst give me the assurance that Thou wouldst raise him to the Episcopacy by a heavenly grace, prefigured by the cloud. I hinted as much to him that day." . . .

Nor was Jeanne deceived. M. de Bousquet was made Bishop, "contrary to the expectations of his friends and enemies; the former had given up the hope, the latter were trying to prevent it, and all had

reason to say that there is no counsel as against Thee, my Lord and my God." *

In one of her journeys to Avignon, the Countess de Serviéres confessed to Jeanne that she greatly disliked her daughter's entering the Order, and yet, how could she resist a vocation which evidently came from God? The child, then only thirteen years of age, was so determined to become a religious, that she could not be induced even once to leave the convent. Fearing that exterior beauty would prove an obstacle, she had endeavored to scar her face, and one night she had caused all her hair to fall beneath the scissors, so as to have a pretext for not going into the world.

Her mother gave these details to Jeanne, and, with flowing tears, described her mental struggle. She could not resign herself to sacrificing her daughter to a vocation that she admired, and to the Order that she loved, and yet she feared to offend God by her resistance. What rendered her grief the more bitter was that she had no other daughter, nor did there seem any likelihood of having any, since nine years had elapsed since her last being a mother. Jeanne listened kindly, and showed her that the freedom of one's vocation is a sacred duty of the family, and how serious was the calling of her daughter. Then, collecting herself for a few minutes, she said: "Madame, be consoled. Hope with me that the Incarnate Word will give you another daughter to replace the one whom He removes, only to preserve her the better for you, by assuring her salvation."—"Do you guarantee this, my dear mother," said the countess.—"Yes, madame, for I know how good God is; trust in Him, and offer Him your only daughter. You will imitate the Father of the Faithful and will draw down many

* Autobiography.

graces upon your illustrious family." The virtuous lady, as she herself used to relate, found herself all at once encouraged, and had no longer any difficulty in consenting to her daughter's wishes. The prediction of Mother de Matel was realized ; but, as though God wished to make its accomplishment the more evident, it was only after the religious profession of her daughter that Madame de Serviére's prayer was heard. The child of miracle came to replace on the family hearth the child of sacrifice ; the happy mother was deeply grateful, and her veneration for Jeanne much increased.

Cardinal Richelieu, Archbishop of Lyons, could never resolve to favor her works. Feeling, however, that her ways were supernatural, especially since the test to which he had subjected her in her writings, "he one day asked her to question Our Lord about him, and to report faithfully to him whatsoever she might learn. She obeyed, and, when the prelate a second time asked what God had communicated to her, she hesitated at first, and had some difficulty in answering, fearing that his Eminence would be offended by the truth. The Cardinal perceived her embarrassment, and said to her in Latin, knowing that she understood it : 'Well, are there no more oracles in Jerusalem ? Whence is it, daughter, that the oracle will not speak ? I will not leave this place until you have satisfied my curiosity.' She could no longer resist ; she then, with her usual simplicity, made known what Our Lord had often manifested to her on the subject : 'I have always been interiorly warned of the obstacles which your Eminence would interpose to the establishment of the Order in Lyons. God has chosen you to try the patience of His daughters, and yet the Incarnate Word has assured me that His Order should one day be established in this city.' She ended

by announcing that he would die of dropsy, which was contrary to all appearance, since at that time he was of a contrary temperament." *

Our readers have not forgotten how Mother de Matel warned Monseigneur de Miron, Archbishop of Lyons, several months before, of his approaching death. The same prophetic sight was given to her at divers times. In 1653, on occasion of her departure for Lyons, Mother de Matel had to transact some business with Reverend Father Yvant, Prior of the Benedictine monastery on which depended the Convent of the Incarnate Word. She clearly saw that he had but a short time to live, although nothing indicated in him an early death, and, in leaving the parlor, she said so to her daughters. Some days afterwards she was told that he had died suddenly.

We have already related the predictions of Mother de Matel about the death of Francis de Thou, and how she announced, in 1644, that Richelieu would not pass beyond Narbonne, that he would be obliged to return to Paris, and would there soon die.

In the beginning of the month of May, 1643, M. de Saint-Germain, Counsellor of the Parliament of Grenoble, who had at first been opposed to the establishment of the Order of the Incarnate Word in that city, called on Jeanne to assure her of his future good will. In the course of the conversation she told him: "Louis XIII. will die in a few days." He was surprised, though the King was then in a serious state, for, according to certain predictions, he was to live for many years more.

To the same class of prophetic gifts must we refer the manifestations made to Mother de Matel of the

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

death of friends, dear to her piety, that occurred at a distance. This consolation was frequently granted to her in the case of her daughters. In 1659, she saw Our Lord, with banner in hand, conducting, in Roanne, persons who seemed drawn by His love. She knew that one of these was ascending to heaven. Two days after she received a letter announcing the decease of a holy lady, her cousin, who had died in the odor of sanctity, and to whom she was bound by ties of piety and confidence, even more than by those of blood.

Yet another fact of the same kind : "One night," she says, "during the fortnight of the Jubilee, I was borne in spirit to the chapel of the Archbishopric at Lyons, where I saw the late Cardinal (Richelieu). He was bare-headed, vested in the habit of the Carthusians, having, over that, an alb. He came to me, and, with great courtesy, presented me the *Te Igitur*, that is, the Canon of the Mass, begging me to recite for him as much as I could of it ; I accepted the book, kneeling respectfully, but, as he saw that I did not read quickly, he requested it back again.

"At dawn of day I entered our church, where, finding myself alone, I ascended the altar and took the *Te Igitur*, which I recited for him with the exception of the words of consecration. After which, having had a Mass said for his intention, I engaged in prayer, when again he appeared to me, thanking me, and testifying his pleasure on seeing me recite the prayers for him. When I arrived at the sacred words, I begged Thee, Eternal Pontiff, to pronounce them to Thy glory, and to satisfy all that was desired by this Cardinal, so dear to my heart, even after death. This I suppliantly beg again with all the love and

zeal which Thou givest me for him, and that I have always entertained." *

Some years before her death, during the trials to which she was subjected by the capricious and haughty temper of Mother Gérin, Jeanne had a distinct foresight of the fate reserved for the Convent of Paris, and could never banish it from her mind. One day, seeing her absorbed in sorrow, Sister Jeanne de Jesus de Belly ventured to ask the motive. "Alas," said she, "God alone can understand what I suffer. I pray to Him, night and day, to forgive my daughters the evil they occasion me, and I do not find myself heard on high. He shows me naught but evil in the future; ah, what will become of this house? I cannot help weeping over it, as Christ did over Jerusalem." And yet, at that time, to all appearance, the convent was solidly established. The number of the pensioners was always on the increase, and vocations were numerous; the Church, repaired and embellished, was crowded at all solemnities. The religious had instituted the chanting of High Mass on the principal feasts of the year, and on the first Sundays of the month. There were sermons by renowned preachers, music, decorations; nothing was spared to attract the people. This apparent success was an illusion; but Mother de Matel, even while taking part in these manifestations, knew that God saw the heart, and reserved His grace for the pure and humble intention. "Daughter," she would say to Mother de Belly, "I would think, with you, and with our friends, that this edifice is solid, if God had not shown me that they have counteracted His designs. . . . . Ah! if they had but listened to me, God would be content, and all would have been well."

*Autobiography.

We have seen in her Life that the same dark presentiments accompanied her even to her death bed. During her last illness her daughters tried to inspire her with hopes of her recovery and of the future of the house. "No, no," said she, "I shall die, and you will all be dispersed. All the houses of the Order will combine to defend your rights here, but in vain." Some hours before her death, she cast a sad glance on Sister Gravier, and said: "Daughter, how you will have to suffer after my death! They will put you in prison, they will torment you greatly, but be faithful to God, Who will befriend you against those who afflict you, and pray to Him for me, who am your mother. I will never forsake you." All these predictions were to be realized.

CHAPTER XIV.

JEANNE DE MATEL AND THE ROYAL HOUSE OF FRANCE.

The subject which we now approach has a special interest, and we have not hesitated to detach it from the chapter consecrated to the prophetic gifts of Jeanne de Matel; it connects her supernatural action and the history of the Order with the annals of our country. One cannot doubt, indeed, that the holy foundress was frequently favored with visions concerning the events of her times, and that, by her prayers, she gained important graces for her country and for the royal house of France. Her own testimony, impressed with the seal of truth, the consenting silence of witnesses whom she invoked and named, confronted by recitals with which they were perfectly acquainted, their positive declaration when occasion offered, all confirm the authenticity of the facts that we are about to relate.

Louis XIII. had succeeded Henry IV., his father, in the year 1610. His majority was declared in 1614, and in 1615 he espoused the Princess Anne of Austria.

His reign, especially in its first years, was full of difficulties and pregnant with sedition. Protestantism flattered itself that it could conquer, by force of arms, the prestige of which it had been stripped by the abjuration of Henry IV., and, concealing under the mantle of religious zeal personal hatreds and ambitions, many great lords had lent it the support of their nobility and valor. The Rohans, Montmorencies, the La Rochefoucaulds and Soubises, all the

most glorious names of France, are found in the annals of a revolt that had its generals, admirals, an army organized and well provided.

In the beginning of the year 1621, the Calvinists, who, in Bearn and in the south, had been forced to submission, in a campaign in which Louis had fought in person, began to agitate in most of the other provinces, and, in spite of the King, held seditious assemblies in La Rochelle. All efforts to calm or intimidate the seditious having failed, war was resolved on, and the King once more put himself at the head of his army, in the month of April. The contest was prolonged throughout the year ; Montauban resisted capture, and, when Louis XIII. re-entered Paris, in the month of February, 1622, having sent his troops into winter quarters in Guyenne, he left the south a prey to exalted fanaticism, which betrayed itself on every favorable occasion in murder, incendiarism and massacre.

This religious war, one of the worst that, for a long time, had desolated France, was a cause of great anxiety to good Catholics. Persuaded that the continuance of power in the same royal family was the necessary condition of security and order, the nation desired to see the union of the King and the young Princess Anne blessed with issue, and prayed to heaven for the birth of a Dauphin on whom it could build its hopes.

In 1621, the Reverend Fathers Coton and Jacquinot, who shared the preoccupation of Catholics in France in this double question, had recommended it to the prayers of Jeanne, whose acquaintance they had made at Roanne. Our Lord let her know that He had accepted her prayer, that He would make the arms of the King like a " barbed arrow, and that his

sword should prevail." He promised to bless him "for love of St. Louis, his ancestor, and in memory of the clemency of Henri IV., his father."—"He will have children," added the Savior; "they are already born in My thought, to whom all things are present. I love the King, because he hates iniquity and loves justice." And He commented, applying it to him, a part of Psalm 44.

On the eve of St. Lawrence, Jeanne was insisting with her divine Master, asking victory for the King, who had as yet no rest, and for the people. She saw, during her prayer, "Louis XIII., like an eagle with a helm on its head," and our Lord said to her: "Daughter, do you see this King who is an eagle? He will not rest until he has vanquished his enemies, and humbled his rebellious subjects, and especially the heretics, to whom he wishes to show the sun of truth and of the Catholic faith. It will be long before peace is made." *

Peace did, indeed, make itself waited for. After alternate negotiations and contests they were in the year 1627. The King of England, Charles I., jealous of her maritime power, had declared war against France; his minister, Buckingham, with a fleet of ninety vessels and about 10,000 men, disembarked, on the 20th of July, on the Isle of Rhé, and occupied it, with the exception of Fort de la Prie and that of St. Martin, which he had to besiege.

During all this year Jeanne followed, in a series of visions the destinies of France on the field of battle. "One day," she says, "I saw the heavenly hosts in arms inwrought with silver, for the succor of the royal armies. Some days before All Saints, Thou saidst to me: 'Daughter, I will vanquish Buckingham. St. Martin assured Me that in a short time

* Autobigoraphy.

he would see that the King obtained the place of which he was the patron, Fort St. Martin.' ''

On another day, October 25th, whilst she was praying in the Church of the Minims, to St. Genevieve and St. Denis, for France, St. Michael appeared to her as the protector of that nation, and promised her great triumphs for the King, whom God called to repair the ruins made by heresy.

The reign of Louis XIII. verified these predictions. As for Buckingham, he had to retreat before the valor and perseverance of the French, and, November 17th, re-embarked, with the loss of half his army.

These supernatural visions on the affairs of France, which were vouchsafed to Jeanne, caused her friends to desire that she should employ her credit with God to obtain the birth of a prince destined later to take up the inheritance of St. Louis. Reverend Father Voisin, a nephew of Father de Villard, her former confessor, had heard her once speak of a vision, in which our Lord, showing her a "tree of *fleurs de lis*," told her: "Daughter, this tree is the generation of Louis XIII." This he had testified to, and he since renewed the testimony. Hence he came to see her, on the 27th of September, 1625, and said: "Pray to our Lord that He may accomplish the promises that he made to you in regard to their Majesties. When shall we see this tree in flower?"

It was agreed that the Father should say Mass for this intention on the following Sunday, October 3d, in the chapel of Notre Dame de Chazant, at which Jeanne was to assist. On the appointed day she was, in the morning, rapt in God, praying in her oratory for the King and Queen that they might have children. The Savior said to her: "I will magnify my mercy on thy Queen, and will visit her as I did Elizabeth,

making her a mother. I have pity on the humiliations of the good princess." Although it cost her much to interrupt the ecstasy, she wished to be present at the rendezvous; and, on the way, remembering what Father Voisin had told her a few days before: "Be sure that it is God Who speaks to you," she began to doubt whether she was not mistaken. But, as she crossed the threshold of the church, she heard the words: "On whom shall rest My Spirit if not on her who humbles herself before Me, on her who trembles at My words." And, in the middle of the church, a voice said to her: "*Justus germinabit sic ut lilium;* My daughter, Louis the Just shall bloom like the flower of the lily." *

It was on this occasion that the fall of La Rochelle was foretold to her: "Thou gavest me to see a sword, environed by rays such as those that surround the heads of the saints; the colors of the rays were like those of the rainbow. The sword was borne by a celestial power; it was in a sheath of black velvet. Thou saidst to me: 'Daughter, this is the sword of Louis XIII., which shall be victorious at La Rochelle.'"—"And," said Jeanne, "I did not know that he was going to La Rochelle, for, at that time, I knew nothing of the things that were being done in France."

A voice from the tabernacle gave utterance to these words, which corresponded to an anxiety that daily occupied her, and consecrated a kind of alliance between the throne and the Order of the Incarnate Word: "I wish to feed amongst the lilies. I will establish My Order after the victories and blessings which I will bestow upon the King and Queen." *

Father Voisin, after having obtained this confidence from Jeanne, ordered her to put it in writing: "I

* Autobiography.

obeyed him that same month, on the 6th of October, and kept it amongst my writings. . . . The plague having broken out at Lyons, I was commanded to go to Paris. I left my writings in a little box, which I did not again see until my return from Paris, in the year 1632. On seeing the paper on which I had written the revelation concerning the Dauphin, I tore it up. This is the reason of my fault: There was at Paris a religious, who was esteemed a prophet. One day I assured her that we must hope and pray that the Lord would give a Dauphin to our good Queen, and the religious said: 'Not at all, not at all! She will never have a child.' In tearing up the paper I felt some repugnance, but I said to myself: 'The good Mother has more light than I have.' Divine Providence did not allow me entirely to destroy it, so that Reverend Father Gibalin, wishing to see all my writings, in 1633, on reading them, found the pages that remained." What a singular proof of truth and authenticity in this simple and candid recital!

In 1637, the prayers offered up in France for so many years that the Lord might give an heir to Louis XIII., were finally answered. This is what one of the historians of Mother de Matel tells us of her part in the great event, according to an account left by herself:

"In 1637, from the month of September until the end of the year, during many consecutive nights, it seemed to her that she was introduced into the Louvre, and to the presence of their Christian Majesties, and that, when she would have humbled herself before them, the King and Queen, on the contrary, respectfully bowed down before her. At first she regarded this as the dream of a fantastic imagination, and as having no reality, but, as the same appearance was repeated many times in her sleep, she remembered that

God sometimes makes use of this way of instructing His servants.

"Conversing once with the Abbé de Saint-Just, Antoine de Neufville, Vicar General of Lyons, she told him by way of recreation: 'Explain to me my dreams, and I will explain yours, if you have any. It shall be with us as with Joseph and his brothers, except that you will certainly not envy me the happiness that I enjoy in dreams, for, I know not how it is, but nearly every night I find myself in the Louvre, and my kind, not to say respectful, reception by their Majesties puts me in confusion.'—'Believe me,' said the Abbé, 'that is a sign of your future greatness.'—'I shall take care not to think so,' replied Mother de Matel; 'it is too contrary to my inclinations. I would require the same spirit that Eliseus asked of the prophet Elias; I am too simple and candid to live at the Court.'

"The Lord did not allow her long to remain in uncertainty; He revealed to her that the Queen was about to have a son, and that the marks of respect paid to her in dreams by their Majesties, were to make known to her that they owed so great a benefit to her prayers. She communicated what she had learned to Father Gibalin, and required of him inviolable secrecy; the consoling news had not yet been spread.

"Father Jean Roux, a Jesuit, was the first to receive the notice, a few days later, in a letter from a friend at Court. Father Gibalin, in the excess of his joy, could not refrain from letting Father Roux perceive that Mother de Matel, for several years, had known that the Lord would give children to the King. He said too much not to excite the curiosity of Father Roux, and not enough to satisfy it. Importuned by his frequent interrogations, he asked Mother de Matel whether she would object to his explaining himself more fully.

"The humble foundress was in despair at his having already said so much, and implored him, with tears, to be more discreet in future, or she would not have the same confidence in manifesting to him her interior. 'I do not wish,' she said, 'to be accounted a prophetess at Court. I returned from Paris with my secret; although I had had some access to the Queen, I never spoke of it to her, for the greatest mortification that could be visited on me would be that of being regarded by the public as a prophetess.'

"Father Gibalin, seeing her extreme displeasure, refused to say anything further to Father Roux, who was fully determined to advise the Court." *

Jeanne had, by her prayers, contributed to the grace granted to the Queen. She continued to pray for her, and for the happy birth of the child sent to her from heaven. "My expectation was not in vain, nor was I deprived of the joy of seeing the Dauphin; for, on the night between Saturday and Sunday, December 5th, 1638, I saw the blessed child. The sight caused my soul such jubilee that the sisters perceived my extraordinary joy without my telling them its source." She writes elsewhere: "My divine Love was pleased to show me the Dauphin being born that night, and that so clearly that the vision still remains. Having communicated, I was so joyful that I could not contain myself; I had to leap and dance, as David did before the ark of the Lord." Jeanne continues: "The sister who is now writing to my dictation called the others, and said: 'Come, see our Mother, her face is shining.' She often importuned me to tell her the grace that God had granted me that morning, threatening to get Father Gibalin to order me to write it down. The Father came that afternoon, and the

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

sister, together with others, asked him to press me to make known, at least to him, what had occurred that morning. The Father, as usual, urged me to tell him what I was obliged to reveal as to my director. I then told him that the Dauphin was born." *

Of all these circumstances, in which is incontestably revealed her supernatural intervention in the birth of Louis XIV., we have an absolutely authentic proof in the following letter, intended for the Court, serving as a basis of informations that could have been made, written by a man of recognized gravity and holiness, and, consequently, having a character of incontestable truth.

Father Gibalin, wishing to interest the Court in the erection of the Order of the Incarnate Word, some months after the birth of the Dauphin, wrote to the Marchioness de la Flotte, lady of honor to the Queen :

"Lyons, August 3, 1639.

"Madame :—Being commissioned by Monseigneur the Bishop of Nimes to transmit to you the letter in which he begs you to plead before their Majesties for the establishment of the Order of the Incarnate Word, I would think myself guilty were I not to assure you, Madame, on my oath, that I am obliged in conscience to testify, as director of Miss de Matel, that she obtained Monseigneur the Dauphin as a special gift of the Incarnate Word, Who promised him to her, to be followed by the institution of the Order, on the 3d of October, 1627, on which day Father Voisin heard her confession and gave her Communion. After she had emerged from her ecstasy, being adjured by him to reveal what God had said to her, promising to keep the secret, she told him that the Incarnate Word had promised to visit the Queen,

* Autobiography.

and to magnify His mercies upon her, as He had done for St. Elizabeth, the mother of St. John, the Precursor, and that He would give her a Dauphin, having pity on her humiliations, which He regarded, to make her a Queen-mother. The said Father commanded her to write down this promise, and many others made in favor of their Majesties, which she did on the 6th of October, 1627, which paper I have kept for ten years awaiting the fulfilment of the promise. Seeing it realized, I showed the said paper to Father Voisin, asking him whether he recollected what was there set down. He answered in the affirmative, and signed it with his hand as a true fact, and he is ready to confirm it by oath, assuring me that this young person is candor itself, and the most exalted soul in the Church of God. For myself, Madame, I sincerely affirm that, having directed her conscience for six years, and attentively considered what passed in her life and prayers, I have admired the light given to her by the Incarnate Word ; and, having taught theology for eight years, I find myself far from having the knowledge and lights of this maiden, and I have examined them with the greatest theological rigor, finding them as true as they are wonderful.

"Let us bless Him who chooses weak maidens to exhibit His power ! He is the same, Madame, Who has promised to glorify, before His Father and His angels, those who procure His glory before men ; as they have not feared to seek His honor during time, He will honor and glorify them throughout eternity. This honor I wish, Madame, for you, as

"Your humble, &c.,

"J. Gibalin du V. S. J."

It would follow from the following relation of the pious seer, that, in his death, Henry IV. was visited by a ray of divine mercy. Jeanne writes to Father de

Meaux: "On the 23d of October, * whilst sleeping, I seemed to be praying in the Church of the Capuchins. I saw three or four persons entering the choir, amongst whom was the King of France, but he did not seem to be Louis XIII. He resembled his father, Henry IV. I had a feeling of consolation in seeing him so devout to the Blessed Sacrament. In the morning I was not surprised, thinking it to have been Louis XIII., for I knew the piety of that prince. But afterwards, on opening a letter in which I was requested to learn of Our Lord the state of the soul of Henry IV., I at once recalled the vision that I had had in my sleep, and I seemed to understand that it was he who was in grace with God, Who had listened to the prayers of some souls, and had remembered his clemency towards his enemies become his subjects.

"I have been reminded of what St. Gregory did for Trajan, though I did not learn that Henry had been freed from Hell after his death; that must have been at the moment of his last breath."

Her Life shows that the thought of the royal family was a frequent one in the prayers of Mother de Matel. We shall give one charming example: In 1652, having gone to the church of the Theatins to adore the Blessed Sacrament, there exposed, she was obliged to sit down through weariness: "My daughter," said our Lord, "thou art between two of My servants, thy spiritual children, who are kneeling, whilst thou art seated; you three are my *fleurs de lis*. Offer it to me and render me that homage which the Queen and her two sons would give me, were they in the church." "I did so as well as I could; I offered them to Thee, my Lord and my God, not only in that church, but everywhere that I prayed, and wherever

* 1621.

I shall pray. Bless the mother, bless the sons, those two worthy princes, whom thou recommendedst to me before they were born, in 1628 and 1634, placing them, as stalks of the lily, upon my shoulders, to offer them to Thee, and to have them in charge." *

During the campaign of Italy, in 1630, the feeble health of Louis XIII. was severely tried. "In the month of September the King fell sick at Lyons. For some hours he was in the greatest danger; all France thought itself lost. Against all hope he recovered his health." †

Father de Lingendes had heard of the danger, and had instantly warned Jeanne, recommending her to redouble her prayers for his Majesty. "I asked that health of Thee by virtue of Thy Holy Sacrament; for several days and nights I prayed before that throne of grace. I conjured Thy goodness to restore the health of our King, which Thou didst not refuse me." These last words, in their humble reserve, are the more worthy of note in that the King actually attributed his recovery to the Blessed Sacrament.

"On the 12th of February, 1860," relates Jeanne, "having left the church for the kitchen, through the affectionate care of my daughters, who assured me that I had been more than two hours in prayer, Thou didst lift my soul to Thee in the presence of two sisters, who were with me, Sister Catherine Fleurin and Sister Marie Chaud. They waited until I was in a state to speak and eat, it was about nine or ten in the evening, and then asked me what had happened, and what I had heard in my rapture. I thought that Thy wisdom enjoined me to say that a son of the King * had come to thank me for the prayers I had offered to God for

* Autobiography.

† History of France. Dareste. Vol. V., p. 135.

him, in the year of his affliction, when an accusation had been made to the King that, if verified, would have made him incapable of inheriting the crown. . . . In this vision, his blessed soul, after having testified his gratitude, and the joy that he had in being in the way of salvation, gave me to understand that the life of this world is but a breath, saying: 'This life is but a small thing, and one should not be attached to it.' He said no more, and left me in great peace, without saying whether he was in purgatory, or just leaving it; I did not think to ask him." * We know that Gaston d'Orleans had died ten days previously, in his Castle of Blois, where his soul, so long agitated by political intrigues, had sought peace in its last years in the exercise of a sincere piety.

The Queen neglected no occasion of testifying to the Foundress of the Incarnate Word how full her heart was of gratitude since she had learned how indebted she was to her prayers. In 1654, not knowing whether the Community had been able to leave their convent, become uninhabitable on account of the war, and whether they had found an asylum, she ordered Madame de Beauvais to send word to Mother de Matel that she might retire to the Royal Palace, to remain there, with her religious, until the troubles excited by the war were appeased. Madame de Beauvais dispatched an express to communicate the Queen's intentions to the foundress. The humility of Mother de Matel suffered greatly from this distinction, and she was glad to be able to avoid it. She wrote to Madame de Beauvais that Divine Providence had lodged her and her Community in a house that she might well esteem a royal palace, since she had the daily consolation of approaching there the King of Kings in holy Communion; and so they should not be

* Autobiography.

displeased if she did not accept the offer so kindly made to her on the part of the Queen. "I should be greatly obliged," she adds, "if you would present my humble thanks to her Majesty for the honor she has been pleased to show us, and to assure her of our continual prayers for her preservation, and that of the King." *

Happy the times and happy the people when those who govern have such solicitude for the piety of their subjects, and when the gratitude of those who obey associates itself willingly with the submission enjoined by religion and conscience!

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

BOOK EIGHTH.

THE WORK OF MOTHER DE MATEL CONTINUED TO OUR TIMES.

CHAPTER I.

THE WORK OF MOTHER DE MATEL UNTIL THE REVOLUTION.

Some days after the death of Mother de Matel, the Prior of Saint-Germain proceeded to raise the seals affixed to her chamber. Instead of the expected treasures, they found only a few old garments. Sister Gravier was driven from the house, cited before the law for evil treatment of the foundress, and embezzlement, arrested on false testimony, and cast into prison. She resolutely refused to renounce the donation. Her innocence was finally recognized, and she was set at liberty.

The prophecies of Mother de Matel concerning the ruin of the convent were equally well verified. Mother de Belly, by the advice of many persons, consented to recognize Madame Lenet for Superior, on condition that she would assume the habit of the Order, and that after her death the right of election should be restored. But, as the other religious refused submission, the Prior of Saint-Germain, having become administrator of the diocese during the vacancy of the see, after the death of Monseigneur de Péréfixe, published a mandate which adjudged the goods of the convent to the general hospital, for the benefit of the poor. The

King, being misinformed, granted letters conformably, and the administrators of the hospital instituted vigorous measures to have the letters enregistered.

Mother de Matel had foretold that the four houses would unite to sustain the rights of that of Paris. In fact, there soon appeared on the scene Mother de la Verpiniére, named Superior, to represent the Convent of Lyons, the Mothers Mary Margaret Gibalin and Robert of the Presentation, of the Convent of Avignon. They brought the favorable decision of the Primacy of Lyons, confirming the election made by the religious, and dispossessing Madame Lenet of her pretensions. At the same time came Mother Gérin from Grenoble, with another professed. They could not be received in the convent, and Madame de Rossignol procured them an apartment in the city.

But Mother de la Verpiniére having died, the other religious entered the convent for the interment, and Madame Lenet, seeing their grief at having to leave it, suffered them to remain. There was great question of making a compromise with her; the friends of the Order leaned to that opinion, and had discussed the conditions that seemed acceptable. They saw therein the advantage of putting an end to an unfortunate state of things, and of uniting all parties in one common effort to destroy the pretensions of the administrators of the general hospital. Mother Gérin would never consent to propose an accommodation with Madame Lenet before judgment rendered by the Superior Chamber, before whom the case had been carried, and her obstinacy finished, as it had begun, the ruin of the house.

All Paris took sides in the cause, in which were concerned the interests of the religious of the Incarnate Word. M. de Rossignol had worked strenuously in its favor, and many of the Counsellors, at first

prejudiced, were made to see the justice of their cause. It was warmly pleaded, proofs in hand, by M. du Rézé. But the First President, anything but impartial in the affair, supported a contrary conclusion, pleading the authority of the King and the Church, who had decided it, and to whom, he said, they should leave the whole responsibility. There was one thing remarkable. One of the arguments that he urged, and on which he most insisted, was, that, according to one of the contracts, these goods appeared to be a restitution, and, as such, naturally reverted to the poor. Mother de Matel, then, was right in her earnest rejection of this clause. At the same time, confiding more in measures than in argument, the President had taken care to introduce to the Assembly a great many Counsellors little instructed in the case, and who formed their opinion after him. Finally, a judgment of September 4th, 1671, gave to the general hospital all the goods of the suppressed houses, beginning with that of the Incarnate Word, subject to the condition of providing for the food and support of the surviving religious. Hence, a few days later, squads of archers might have been seen carrying across the city the furniture of the pillaged convent. The religious, in their turn, were borne off as though they were criminals. They were at prayer in the choir when men, armed with swords and spears, entered to seize them. One can easily conceive the trouble and fear of the unfortunate sisters. The soldiers brutally took hold of them, throwing them out one after the other, and bruising them with blows. They were conveyed in different carriages, escorted like criminals through the different streets of Paris, to the hospital of La Pitié, where they were crowded, four or five together, in rooms scarcely large enough for one.

The religious of Avignon and Grenoble did not delay returning to their own convents. The others beheld their captivity prolonged; but they sanctified it by a resignation, a piety and sweetness that won the admiration even of their enemies. Finally, having no more hope nor resources, they came to Lyons to shelter there the last remnants of a Community that had caused such pain in its foundation, and such sorrow; a theatre in which were exhibited the most crying injustice and the most heroic virtues. And thus were fulfilled, in this Jerusalem of Mother de Matel, the predictions which she had uttered with so many tears.

And yet, it is not the only example of a great work, willed and blessed by God, succumbing to the stroke permitted by a mysterious and inscrutable design. Who, to cite but one instance, was ever more sure of his mission as founder than the illustrious patriarch of monastic life in the West, St. Benedict? Yet, "a nobleman, whom he had converted, and who enjoyed his familiarity, found him one day weeping bitterly. He remained a long time contemplating him; then, seeing that his tears ceased not to flow, and that they arose not from the ordinary fervor of prayer, but from a mortal grief, he inquired the cause. The Saint answered: 'All this monastery that I have built, all that I have prepared for my brethren, has been delivered over to the pagans by a judgment of God all-powerful. Scarcely have I obtained the safety of their lives.' Less than forty years later, the destruction of Monte Cassino by the Lombards verified the prediction."*

But, if the justice of God, impenetrable in its designs and jealous of its rights, had permitted the

* Montalembert. Monks of the West.

ruin of the Convent of Paris, it was not slow to inflict terrible chastisements on those who had accomplished it. The memoirs written shortly after the event bear witness to the impression felt by contemporaries.

"Scarcely had the fatal decree been issued which despoiled the convent than the First President, who had been its chief author, suffered a very considerable loss. A storm at sea destroyed twenty vessels, in which was involved the greater part of his fortune. The grief that he conceived shortened his days; he died not long after in the greatest pain. The Procurator General was even worse treated; he lost, almost simultaneously, his father, his wife and his son, with thirty thousand livres of rent, which his father, in dying, left to a woman whom he had secretly married, and by whom he had three children. Three Counsellors, who had voted through prejudice or passion, died suddenly after the decision of the process. No one in Paris failed to understand these events, and it was publicly said that from Heaven Mother de Matel was having justice administered to those who had done injustice to her.

"Madame Lenet had been obliged, like the others, to leave the Convent of the Incarnate Word. She looked about for some time in search of an honorable residence, was abandoned by the Prior of St. Germain, and ended by obtaining the priory of Benedictines de Mousson, on the frontiers of Champagne, certain conditions being stipulated, which she did not observe, whence resulted a lawsuit, which she lost, together with the benefice. She had no more resources. She died in poverty and misery, ravaged by a hideous and humiliating disease, that caused her flesh to fall in shreds, and left her for some days living in the midst of the horrors of corruption.

"The official who had exhausted his anger on the religious of the Incarnate Word was bitten by a mad dog, and when he was hastening to seek a remedy in sea-baths, was stabbed by assassins without any one being able to discover the authors of his death.

"Finally, the Prior, after having lost all his credit, became an object of contempt even to those whom he had so long deceived, and died, deprived of all human consolations, to render before the tribunal of God a terrible account of the unjust violence that his passion had led him to exercise." *

The Order of the Incarnate Word had lost, in the Convent of Paris, one of the jewels of its crown. But, more precious than all those that it had lost, was the body of its venerable foundress, which it had to leave in a soil henceforth estranged from it.

"Everyone knows," says a notice drawn up by the religious of the Convent of Avignon, "that the haste with which our sisters of Paris were forced to leave the convent of our Order in that city, did not permit them to remove the body of our worthy mother, and that, with the exception of the heart, inclosed in a leaden box and transmitted to the Convent of Lyons, the rest remained in the custody of the religious of the Abbey of Panthemont, because the convent which we abandoned became an adjunct to their own," Rue de Grenelle, Faubourg de Saint-Germain.

"It was situated," says the Abbé Gravier, "between the streets of Sévres and Cherche Midi. To-day the site is occupied by the house of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, by that of the Daughters of St. Thomas of Villeneuve, a Protestant temple, as it is said, and a barrack of military correction, in which,

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

before 1830, was the chapel of the religious, as is attested by the widow of an old Colonel, Madame de Collardeau-Laferet, benefactress of the Convent of Azerables, who had seen it." *

The religious of Panthemont, having built a new church, had the bodies which were buried in the old one removed. This ceremony "was performed in the presence of the Commissioners of Paris, the deputies of the clergy, the Abbé de Citeaux, Superior General of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and of the whole Community." The Abbess caused the tomb of Mother de Matel to be opened, situated in front of the steps of the high altar, and recognized by the epitaph there engraved. She herself collected the bones, and even the dust of our venerable Mother, says the notice of Azerables, copying the *proces-verbal* of the translation,† and placed them in a new coffer which she had had prepared, and which she had conveyed, under her own eyes, to the vault destined for abbesses, with every mark of the greatest esteem and distinction, and she had them sealed with her seal in presence of the witnesses above mentioned.

"But the Incarnate Word would not forever deprive His Order of so precious a treasure, and He chose as His instrument a member of that society to whose efforts, after our holy Mother, we are indebted for its establishment, and who, even after its dispersion, cares for all our wants. We mean Father Caranave.

"This Father, full of zeal for the increase of our Order, and in particular for that of our house at Avignon, and especially for the glory of our Mother, being in Paris in 1771, felt himself interiorly urged to

* Order of the Incarnate Word and of the Blessed Sacrament, by Father Joseph de Jesus.

† Taken from an authentic copy of these divers *proces-verbal*.

procure that deposit, which it was not natural that strangers should retain in their possession. But the enterprise seemed difficult of execution, because of the veneration in which the holy body was held by the religous of Panthemont. Nevertheless, he resolved to attempt it, and, by way of occasion for entering into negotiation with them, he seized the pretext of a visit to their Abbess, Madame de Bétizy de Méziéres, whom he had formerly known at Chambésy. The Father, being well aware of the frequent but unavailing measures that we had taken to obtain what he wished to ask, felt himself interiorly moved to enter the church before going to the parlor, that he might pray at the tomb in which was preserved the relic of which he sought the restitution in our behalf.

"After having followed the inspiration, he saw the Abbess, and, during the interview, he caused the conversation to turn on the Order of the Incarnate Word, on our Convent of Avignon, which he was pleased to praise, and, finally, on our holy foundress, and then made known our desire to possess the precious remains resting in her church.

"Of these desires the Abbess could not have been ignorant, since she herself had resisted them, and so it was but timidly, notwithstanding his zeal, that Father Caranave ventured to renew their expression. But the day had finally arrived when the Incarnate Word willed to reunite the Mother to those whom she had given Him for spouses. In this first interview, Father Caranave succeeded in obtaining, if not the full consent of the Abbess, at least a hope that she would one day fulfill our hopes. This favorable beginning reanimated the zeal of the Father, and caused him to resolve to spare no effort in bringing the affair to a happy issue.

"In order not to mistake the finger of God that appeared in this affair, so interesting to us, and that in

a way to call for all our gratitude, we repeat that, humanly speaking, success seemed impossible, on account of the singular veneration in which the Abbess and her whole Community held the precious and respected deposit, which they regarded as the safeguard of their convent and a source of benediction to the Community. . . . But God, Who conducted the enterprise, and Who holds the hearts of men in His hand, changed those of the sisters, and the Abbess, whose goodness towards us we can not sufficiently thank, consented for herself and for her Community. This success cost much care and fatigue to Father Caranave, residing, as he did, far from Paris, and being obliged to make frequent voyages to that city during the eight months he employed in its achievement. He once wrote to us that it cost him more trouble than he would need to take in founding a convent, but that he would be abundantly recompensed by succeeding in the enterprise, which would serve as a lasting proof of his attachment to our Order, and to our house in particular. It must also be one of perpetual gratitude on our part.

"As soon as the Abbess had given her consent, she had, in concert with the Father, a second *proces-verbal* drawn up on the 4th of May, 1772, to withdraw the body from the vault. He entered the convent in company of the Abbé de Citeaux, the Abbé Lombard, two notaries, and a cabinet maker, with planks all prepared for a new coffin, the old being almost all rotted away by the dampness of the vault. After having verified, by aid of the first *proces-verbal*, the coffin which they sought for, it was opened in presence of the witnesses I have named. It was found that the bones had greatly crumbled in the dampness of the tomb, and after the lapse of a century. There remained, however, one thigh-bone, and two or three

of the arm, or fore-arm, nearly entire, one large one, supposed to be a shoulder-blade, an upper part of the skull, and some small bones.

"In order to risk no loss of the precious relics, they determined to leave them in the old coffin, which was inclosed in the new. After having fastened, corded and sealed it, they enveloped it in a waxen cloth. All these details are more minutely described in the *proces-verbal*, preserved in our archives, which was signed by the Abbess and her Community, as well as by the witnesses.

"The precious case was then committed to Father Caranave for safe custody. After having examined the several ways in which it could be expedited for our earliest gratification, he concluded that, with proper precautions, the diligence would be at once the quickest and the least expensive. With the consent of the Nuncio, he dispatched it by that conveyance on the feast of Our Lady of Angels, and under this holy guardianship it reached us on the 13th of August, feast of the death of the Blessed Virgin, which caused us to remark, with sentiments of gratitude, that the Most Blessed Virgin, our holy Mother, continued to favor her faithful servant with her protection, who, under her auspices, notwithstanding all obstacles to her designs, arrived, in 1639, at Avignon, on the day of the Presentation in the Temple, and there gave the holy habit of the Order to her first five daughters, on the Octave of the Immaculate Conception.

"We cannot express the sentiments with which we were penetrated on the reception of the precious treasure. Our Reverend Father Superior had recommended us not to give too much demonstration to our joy; we obeyed, but with difficulty, and, we confess, not without great self constraint. But in private we

were recompensed by the sentiments of tenderness and respect excited in us by the presence of a body so dear to our hearts. Since the happy day on which we became possessed of it, there is not one of us who has not experienced a sensible consolation in praying before the precious remains of a Mother so worthy of our love.

"After having, to satisfy our first ardor, kept them for a few days in our Community room, they were placed in the upper sacristy till the 25th of August. On that day, M. Maliére, the Vicar General, M. Rigaud, the Promoter, M. Philippe, Secretary and Chancellor of the Archbishop, M. Patasse, our confessor, with two other priests, a notary, and the Commander de la Bailie, in the character of friend and protector of the convent entered in order to draw up a third *procès-verbal* for the verification of the casket, based on the two preceding ones sent to us from Paris. This formality, from which we could not be dispensed, lasted four hours. Those gentlemen found everything in order.

"We awaited with impatience the opening of the coffin, and our hearts thrilled with joy in the hope of seeing the precious treasure there inclosed, when the Promoter, in a firm voice, declared that it was not to be opened ; that an imprudent zeal was not to forestall the judgment of the Church ; that we must patiently wait, and fervently ask of God to glorify His faithful servant on earth. These words were to us a thunder-clap ; but we understood their wisdom, and we acquiesced, in the hope of putting no obstacle to the glory of a Mother so worthy of our greatest sacrifices. This caused us to renounce the sweet and pious curiosity of seeing the precious remains.

"After reading the *procès-verbal*, the casket was restored to its former state, the seal of the Archbishop

affixed, and it was replaced in the sacristy until the 11th of September, the anniversary of the death of our blessed Mother. On that day, a catafalque was erected in the choir, on which was laid the coffin, covered by a mortuary cloth ; the altar was draped in black, and lighted with many candles. During the service, which was most solemn, several priests, vested in black, appeared at the altar. Our sisters chanted the Requiem Mass with all the exterior zeal possible ; but, in the depth of their hearts, they invoked, with tender confidence, her for whom the sacrifice was offered.

"After the last absolution, which followed the Mass, our Reverend Mother de Saint Régis de Blanchety, the Superioress, Mother de Saint Maurice de Montaigu, Assistant, and Sister de Saint Stanislas de Blanchety, Mistress of novices, had the sweet and honorable consolation of carrying the casket, followed by all the Community, in their choir mantles, candle in hand, singing the *Miserere*, to one of the interior chapels, where it was inclosed in the thickness of the wall, which is the same as that of the church. The door of this inclosure was then locked with a double key, which the Superioress keeps, and there it is that we go to pay assiduous court to our good Mother, who will not fail, we trust, to give us proofs of her tenderness."

We shall take up again the history of those precious remains.

Let us now briefly recount the history of the Order of the Incarnate Word up to the Revolution. We shall borrow the details from the notice of the Order, which we have been quoting, abridging them, however.

The direction of the house at Grenoble had not been altogether wise and prudent. To relieve the situation, Mother Sorel, in 1683, conducted a part of the Community to Sarrian, under the patronage of the

Duchess de la Roche-Guyon, who had always coveted the title of foundress. Four years later, those who remained were obliged to join the little colony, and then, on account of the smallness of the place, the reunited Community went to seek another establishment at Orange. Ten years later, when this place was ceded to the Calvinists, as a city for their religion, they went to Roquemaure, for which reason the convent has not been accounted a foundation rightly so called.

"It was the Convent of Lyons that had to complete the mystic number of houses revealed to Mother de Matel. In 1697, it made a foundation at Anduze. The pious colony was conducted by Mother Louise de Rhode, and placed under the direction of Reverend Mary of the Mother of God, of whom extraordinary things are told. In that country, ravaged by heresy, where passions were as burning as its sun, tribulations were necessarily long continued ; yet, the virtues of the spouses of the Incarnate Word triumphed, and gained for them the veneration of the most estranged. At that time the country was torn by civil war, and Anduze infested by the Camisards, the obstinate enemies of religious orders ; every kind of enormity was to be feared at their hands. And yet, when, by the fears they inspired, the besieged convent was left almost destitute of aid, one of these fanatics, vanquished by the respect which true piety begets, caused bread and wine to be passed over the walls to diminish the sufferings of those holy women.

"A no less dangerous trial that the convent had to undergo was that, shortly after its foundation, by order of the King, it was forced to give asylum to many Protestant women and girls confined there, who threatened sack and fire to those who ministered to them with all the delicacy of charity. Thanks to God, regularity was maintained, and, with it, fervor, in spite

of the obstacles they had to encounter, or rather through the providential existence of those obstacles.

The memory of the pious daughters of the Incarnate Word is still preserved in Anduze, and seems, like an aureole of imperishable glory, to shine above the ruins of the convent.

"Lately," writes the Curate to the religious of Lyons in 1875, "I was administering the last sacraments in your ancient chapel. The flags are the same; the place of the sanctuary lamp is still to be seen—how sad it all is!" May the Incarnate Word, the light of the world, shed His most burning rays on those places watered by the sweat and blood of virgins who consecrated themselves to Him.

"Anduze and Roquemanre were situated in the actual circumscription of Gard, in the diocese of Nimes; with the Convents of Avignon, Lyons and Paris, they form exactly the five stations which the venerable Mother had seen in the five wounds of the Savior, perhaps to indicate that those convents should be overthrown by the spirit of evil and torn away from the crucifixion of the Savior.

"The first four had persevered in a perfect observance of the rule when the hour struck for their ascent to Calvary. The Convent of Avignon, in particular, was one of the most flourishing and most beloved in that city. The memory of the daughters of the Incarnate Word, many of whom sealed their faith with their blood, has remained fresh and green in the Catholic city.

"These ancient houses no longer exist, the destructive ploughshare of the red revolution has scarcely left a vestige behind. As pure victims, their ruin was required as an expiation by the thrice holy justice of God, before Whom we answer, the one for

the other. What reparation to the Lord could be offered by so many other bodies, gangrened and expiring, by a twofold death, with the century of corruption? But these, immolated in the wounds of the Savior, contained the germ of a glorious resurrection. 'And who knows,' says a daughter of the Incarnate Word, 'whether, as once Herod pursued to the death the children of Bethlehem, seeking that of the newly born Son of God, the object of his fear and hate, so, now, the demon conspired, by the destruction of the religious orders in France, to envelope with them that of the Incarnate Word, of which he foresaw the *power and wonderful works in the last days of the world.*'" *

Suppressed, as were all the other Congregations, by the decree of 1790, the Order of the Incarnate Word had to pass through the land of exile before it could re-enter Israel. There it now dwells, and the Christian world, we hope, will see its glory increase.

* The Order of the Incarnate Word and of the Blessed Sacrament.

CHAPTER II.

RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ORDER OF THE INCARNATE WORD.

A constant tradition attaches to the ancient Church of Limoges a glory of which it is proud. Its first Bishop, St. Martial, was that little child whom Jesus showed to His disciples, after having blessed it, and pressed it to His bosom, on that day when he wished to give them, in the simplicity and innocence of childhood, a type of humility and submissive confidence. That benediction and tender embrace have borne, in our day, one of their sweetest fruits when the Incarnate Word confides to the little boy, become His Apostle and the Pastor of a great people, the cradle of that arisen Order that bears His name.

God makes use of the storm to carry the seeds of the flowers from one to another shore ; when He wills, He makes revolutions serve to transplant and reinvigorate His works. It is the history of the restoration of the Incarnate Word, which we are now about briefly to relate.

The parish of Azerables, in the canton of Souterraine, is situated on the confines of three departments, the Haute-Vienne, the Indre and the Creuse. Attached to the latter, it forms a part of the diocese of Limoges. It was there that was born, on the 26th of July, 1761, in the village of Mondiou, the future restorer of the Order founded by Mother de Matel ; there it was that, under her ministering hand, was to be planted anew a branch of that wonderful tree, itself to become a great trunk.

The Abbé Denis had been obliged to leave France in 1792, to escape the alternative of a criminal oath or the scaffold. With three of his fellow priests, he directed his steps to Italy ; first, in Chambésy, then in Bologna and Ravenna, he tasted the bitterness of exile, and courageously endured it. During his stay in Ravenna, "lodged in a convent dedicated to the holy martyr of that city, Apollinaris, he imbibed a great devotion for that great Bishop," one of the first and most glorious witnesses of the Incarnate Word.

But, when a decree permitted the return of the exiles, the Abbé Denis did not hesitate to confront the last convulsions of the revolutionary hydra, to carry succor to souls so long abandoned, in the labors of the ministry, and to tread again, with the companions of his exile, the road to his country. When almost at the end of their journey, they were arrested as *suspects*, and cited before the tribunal of Guéret. Cast into prison, the Abbé Denis confessed in chains the faith that he had confessed in proscription and in exposing himself to death. For entire acquittal, he was offered the oath of the constitution : "I have not come three hundred leagues," he replied, "to sell my conscience." Chained like a malefactor, he was led back, from brigade to brigade, to the Italian frontier.

Abbé Denis re-entered the Convent of Apollinaris, where, to satisfy his zeal, they assigned him a confessional in a convent of religious, for the benefit, no doubt, of exiled French ladies. There he made the acquaintance of the worthy Mother of the Holy Ghost, Chinard Durieux, professed of the former Convent of the Incarnate Word at Lyons, an exile like himself. Filled with holy enthusiasm for her Order, the good religious often conversed with him on the subject ; still they do not seem to have determined on any plan

for the time when they would be free to re-enter their unfortunate country.

"At last their exile had an end; the Revolution was extinguished in its own excesses, and they could return to France. They arrived at Lyons on the 8th of October, 1801. The Abbé Denis persuaded Mother Durieux to await in that great city, in the bosom of her family, the time appointed by divine Providence. As for himself, he went to evangelize Azérables, his native parish, of which, shortly after, he was appointed curate. At first they kept up a regular correspondence, which, we know not how, was soon interrupted, so much so that they lost each others address." *

The Abbé Denis had, by nature and by grace, and through the trials of exile, a character of which the leading traits seemed to disagree, but were in reality in perfect accord. When still a child, by what was thought a miraculous intention, he knew that he was called to the priesthood: "If the gift of the tongue was wanting to him, at least a ray of sanctity illuminated his calm and serene countenance." * He received sensible favors from God, signs of what he would have to perform, though he did not suspect it. His prayer became remarkable, and the transports of his soul, making themselves known exteriorly, procured him the reputation of a saint. It was said that the angels lifted him up when he was at the altar; as to the fact of the elevation itself, it has been attested by persons worthy of faith. On one occasion, in particular, during the High Mass at Christmas, he was elevated for ten minutes in sight of all the people.

To these divine favors he corresponded by a profound humility and an admirable mortification. His disciplines were to the blood; for couch he used the

* Order of the Incarnate Word and of the Blessed Sacrament.

floor of his apartment or the pallet of his bed. Being the curate, in order to conceal his austerities from others, he permitted no one to enter his chamber. He forgot himself so completely that once, when, after the soup, the servant forgot to serve the rest of the dinner, he did not recollect that he had not eaten it, and remained for some time interiorly occupied with God." *

Such extraordinary tokens of fervor would naturally attract the attention of a Christian people, and the parish of Azérables, one of the first opened to worship, soon saw a considerable number of souls drawn to the good Father. Amongst these were three pious girls, the Misses Mollat, from Lauriére (Haute-Vienne), Jouannin, and Gayaud, from the Canton of Dun, in the Creuse. In the worst days, they had, in the restricted circle of their influence and relations, contributed to the preservation of the faith in the people about them. They had, at the risk of their life, provided asylums for outlawed priests, and had not feared to brave the dangers and darkness of the night in order to be present at the holy sacrifice of the Mass. They were filled with joy when they heard of the return of the Abbé Denis, and hastened to Azérables. The sight of the venerable priest at the altar had upon them the liveliest impression, and at once inspired the desire never to quit the happy parish."

"Urged by these three pious maidens, who wished, under his guidance, to lead a life wholly detached from the world, the Abbé Denis assembled them together, in 1806, in an humble house, for the practice of the common life. Guided solely by the inspirations of grace, he had rules drawn up for a hospital life, according to the light that had been communicated to

* Order of the Incarnate Word and the Blessed Sacrament.

him by two theologians of Saint-Sulpice, MM. Hugon and Baudry ; and, with the approbation of Monseigneur Dubourg, of holy memory, he summoned his first daughters to take the habit ; they pronounced their vows on the 5th of July, 1807. Was he already inclined to adopt the name of the Incarnate Word? Was he hesitating? However that may be, during the holy Mass, which formed part of the ceremony, he distinctly heard, in spirit, these words: 'Begin again in these virgins, whom thou offerest me to-day, the Order of the Incarnate Word ; that is the name I wish thee to give them, and no other.' There could no longer be any doubting.

"The good Father began to accustom them to the practice of abnegation, poverty and obedience ; then, when he had recognized their virtue, he opened a free school, and soon a boarding school, the direction of which was entrusted to Mother Theresa Mollat, who was named Superioress, and who united to an experienced judgment a more cultivated intellect than those of her companions. Sister Magdalen Gayaud had, for her mission, the visitation of the sick, and Sister Clara Jouannin was charged with giving catechetical instruction ; seven other young persons dwelt in the house with them.

"Our good sisters had to endure all sorts of privations in their modest habitation, and yet, to the hunger, caused by a poverty more strict than they were engaged for, they added fearful austerities. They devoted themselves, as victims of penance, to expiate, as much as possible, the crimes of the Revolution. Hence, they obliged themselves, by day and night, to the perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Every day, during the holy sacrifice, one of them held up a large crucifix to the gaze of all, as an invitation to make honorable

reparation to the divine Savior for the outrages committed against him, especially in France, during the late years of disorder, impiety and blasphemy. They often made the way of the cross, this exercise supplying for them the canonical hours. The time which they snatched from prayer was employed in gaining a bread so black that it is said the very dogs refused to eat it. Yet, the Father who broke for them daily the bread of the divine Word stripped himself of everything to aid them to live. Without experience to moderate their own zeal, having only the zeal, no less fervent, of their director, many so far injured their health that they never regained it.

"One day the good Lord wished to show them that he was satisfied with their pious excesses, or rather, according to the interpretation of Father Denis, to show that this little work, so humble in its commencement, would have a great and brilliant extension. It is related that, when they were going one night to the parish church, whither they often went barefooted in rigorous weather, they saw the drops of holy water, with which one of them sprinkled her companions, changed into sparks of light.

"The little house, having become entirely too small, the courageous sisters did not hesitate to work themselves, to the full extent of their strength, at the erection of another, large enough for the requirements of the religious life. The workmen of the parish offered themselves for the labor with remarkable good will. The good Father Denis laid the foundations in the month of March, 1811, with ceremonies in which the neighboring clergy and the local authorities were invited to participate. This was sufficient to excite ill will. The Incarnate Word, Who does not give His blessing without adding the prick of the thorn to the consolations of grace, permitted the tempter to

raise contradictions that changed their hope into the fear of ruin. The Government intimated an order to discontinue the work. But steps were taken to obtain from the Emperor a recognition of the Community, and, in spite of all ill will, it was approved on the 23d of July, 1811, on the feast of St. Apollinaris, to whom Father Denis liked to attribute the success." *

The little Community of Azerables, by its edification and virtue, might well be the young stock on which should be grafted to new life the Order of the Incarnate Word ; to be that Order itself, to have its savor and fruit, it needed the authentic approbation of the Church and of God, Who gives life, with its privileges and graces. Providence supplied, in a touching way, by a kind of transfusion of the generous sap of the ancient trunk, derived from the purest source. Already some religious, belonging to other dispersed congregations, had tried to find a refuge in the humble Community of Azerables. The attempt had been useless ; they could not arrive at an understanding.

"It was now nine years since they had begun to take the vows in the new house of the Incarnate Word, when Father Denis, having renewed his correspondence with Mother Chinard-Durieux, invited her to Azerables. She gladly accepted the invitation, bringing with her the costume, the rules and constitutions, the directory, and all that she could collect of the monuments of the Order. The venerable Mother arrived on the 28th of October, 1816, the festival of the holy Apostles Simon and Jude, and was received with acclamation. They gave her at once the office of Mistress of Novices, with the power to make in the house all the changes she thought proper to render it

* Order of the Incarnate Word and of the Blessed Sacrament.

conformable to the former Communities of the Incarnate Word. On the 2d of February, all the sisters, ten in number, who, till then had worn a black robe with a red cincture, adopted the ancient costume. The Vicar General of Limoges, M. de Montclare, presided at the ceremony. The Superioress laid down her office in favor of Mother of the Holy Ghost, Chinard-Durieux, who was elected by ballot, and remained Superioress until her death, the day of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, September 8th, 1819.

"Mother de Quiquerant-Baujeu, in religion, Sister Mary Victor-Angelica, formerly a religious of the Convent of Avignon, having heard, through the newspapers, the restoration of the Order, started at once, against the entreaties of her family and friends, and arrived at the presbytery on the 20th of October, 1818. She had said to herself that, if at first she were refused, it would be a sign of the Divine will that she should insist and remain, but, on the contrary, if she were honorably received she should return. Clothed with the dress of the world, over the costume of the Incarnate Word, she presented herself, and, without saying a word, opened her robe sufficiently to disclose the habit, as sole annunciation of the object of her visit. Had the Lord revealed the dispositions of her soul to the Curate? He answered her in a rough and angry tone: 'What do you want here? I have no room for you.'—'He to Whose Order I belong,' she answered, 'was born in a manger; give me a place in your stable and I shall be content.'

"This excellent religious was no less estimable than Mother Chinard-Durieux, although, having been able to conceal herself in Avignon, she had escaped the rigors of exile. As it was principally due to her noble father that the Order owed the favor of possess-

ing the body of Mother de Matel, she had the merited privilege of guarding the sacred deposit during the dispersion. * She brought it with her to Azerables, together with all that she had been able to collect of the writings of the holy foundress. On entering the Community, she exclaimed, with the holy Simeon at the Temple : 'Now, O Lord, Thou dost dismiss Thy servant in peace, since my eyes have seen the Incarnate Word in the restoration of His Order. And, in truth, she survived only three months, and then went to receive the reward promised to those who persevere to the end.

"A few days after the arrival of Mother de Quiquerant, Sister St. Paul Deschamps, professed of the former Convent of the Martyrs of Gourguillon, came to join the preceding, as a third witness of the canonical restoration of the Order in its ancient spirit. She would willingly have yielded to the instances of Mother of the Holy Ghost, who wished her to go with her in 1816, but the hope, which some of her companions entertained, of restoring their old convent, alone kept her back. But, towards the close of 1818, feeling the infirmities of old age, she decided to depart, being desirous of dying in the Order, of which she did not hope to see the restoration in Lyons." †

Thus the Order of the Incarnate Word saw itself resuscitated. Through respect for the first rules, and the habits adopted in the first years, the new convent continued, with dispensation of the cloister, to visit the poor and the sick. "With the divine blessing, the house at Azerables grew more and more, despite its contracted means, or, rather, enriched by its poverty. Not only were they obliged, in 1819, to

* She was at the Convent of Avignon when the remains of the venerable foundress were translated, in 1772.

† The Order of the Incarnate Word and of the Blessed Sacrament.

add a new building to the former, but it became necessary to send forth colonies. From this little Community, so feeble in its beginning, and troubled in its existence, which the ecclesiastical authorities several times threatened to end, have issued, directly or indirectly, all the convents of the Order actually existing.'' *

It does not enter into our plan to give the detailed history of the foundation of those houses, nor of their life; we shall merely give their names. But the nomenclature, no matter how summary it may be, seems the necessary conclusion of this work.

* The Order of the Incarnate Word and of the Blessed Sacrament.

CHAPTER III.

THE ORDER OF THE INCARNATE WORD FROM ITS RESTORATION TO OUR OWN TIMES.

An attempt at a foundation was first made at Saint-Bénoit-du-Sault, diocese, of Bourges, but it did not succeed. It was at Évaux, in the Creuse, that Divine Providence had willed to plant the first swarm from the new hive.

A venerable religious of Saint-Alexis de Limoges, Mother Mary of Jesus du Bourg, of an old and Christian family of Toulouse, a niece of the Bishop who had twice sanctioned the restoration of the Order, was the instrument that God chose for this work. Obliged, by her superiors, to a change of air, on account of her health, in one of her journeys she made the acquaintance of Miss Fanny du Rivaux. This pious lady had received from her father an important piece of property, formerly belonging to a Genovesan convent, "a large and fine house," well situated, a vast garden, but at that time "in devastation." Having heard of the Order of the Incarnate Word, she desired to consecrate the property to it. She communicated her intentions to Sister Mary of Jesus, and invited her, with the consent of the Bishop, to spend a few days with her at Évaux, to advise her in the affair. Madame du Bourg passed by Azerables, had an interview with Father Denis, and found herself set apart to begin the foundation.

They succeeded in acquiring the rest of the property in the possession of others besides Miss du Rivaux. The Community was approved by an

ordinance of June 20th, 1827, and the work was begun. Three sisters came from Azerables; a free class, a school and a boarding school were opened. Postulants presented themselves, and the house was gradually, by wise additions, fitted for its new destination. "It is the first house," writes Mother du Bourg, in the month of July, 1828, "since the restoration of the Institute, in which the rule can be strictly observed, since the cloister was established from the very first." An authentic and touching tradition is preserved regarding this convent. When Father Denis came to visit it, even before he had entered, he gave, without having seen it, its exact description. And, as he went over it, examining the details, he recognized a house that St. Apollinaris had formerly shown him as one that would belong to the Incarnate Word.

Mother du Bourg had a great part in the installation; it may be said that she was its soul. She exercised the various functions of Assistant, Mistress of Novices, and Treasurer. She could speak of the Incarnate Word and His work only in the most enthusiastic terms: "You will be, perhaps, surprised," she writes, on the 29th of August, 1831, "that I do not enter the Order; but I have many reasons that, for the present, prevent me. The future is in the hands of God. 1st. I feel that the Lord does not wish it. 2nd. I am more certain of avoiding the first place, for which I am incompetent. And then, business undertakings and many journeys."

She had then in her mind a plan, by which the Incarnate Word "should be established in various branches, embrace all states, and all vocations."—"The first branch, which already exists, and is cloistered, occupies itself with the education of youth and in free schools for the poor. There will be

another branch with a different rule. The religious of this branch will consecrate themselves to the education of the young, to the service of the poor, and the care of the sick. They will be especially employed in cities destitute of resources, in small places, in the country. Finally, the third Order will be composed of people of the world, of all states and conditions.''

The Order of the Incarnate Word, more than any other, by its name, the views of its foundress, the predictions made at its birth, has inherited all the tenderness and all the solicitudes of the Heart of Jesus. Nothing, then, forbids it to embrace new works, to accommodate the traditions and spirit of other days to the needs of the present. It has only to imitate the Church, and allow itself to be guided by her. But the thought of Mother du Bourg seemed to aim at constituting in the old work a new Congregation, which, preserving the name, should break with its unity. At all events, the Order of the Incarnate Word did not think itself called, then, to extend the sphere of the providential action traced out by its rules and constitutions. Mother Mary of Jesus, therefore, followed elsewhere the attraction of God, and founded the now flourishing Congregation of the Savior and the Blessed Virgin.

The Convent of Évaux, thanks to its position in the centre of a sympathetic and Christian population, to its religious traditions firmly established, to the wisdom of its mothers, the piety of its daughters, and especially to the blessing of God, does good in peace and strength, and seems destined to occupy, in the plan of the resuscitated Order, the place once held by its sister house of Avignon. Our pen, it will be conceived, is here cramped in its eulogy. Let us be satisfied to point it out to souls enamored of recollection, sacrifice and fervor, as one of those blessed oases,

where the foot sometimes stumbles, it is true, on the pebbles of the path, where the thorn of duty may cause the tears of the heart, but where God holds the first place, receives much devotion, and sows many joys.

Whilst the Convent of Évaux was being built up, and taking the first place in the order of foundations, "at Lyons, they had in vain attempted to re-establish the old convent. It was necessary to go to the new Bethlehem, to draw, thence in unity of origin, that spirit of holy lowliness which confounds the prudence of the wise, and is proper to all that touches the Word made flesh. A pious and fervent ecclesiastic of Lyons consecrated to this work his zeal, his fortune, talents and life, without desiring other title than the simple name of Almoner. By a happy inspiration, M. Galtier sent to Azerables the one amongst his spiritual daughters whom he deemed most fit for the enterprise, and the choice was fortunate. She remained many months in the house, took the habit, and then returned to go with her director to seek a shelter for the new Convent of the Incarnate Word under the shadow of Our Lady of Fourviéres. The elements assigned to her in the beginning were very feeble, but the order of Providence had been followed, and that proved sufficient for success.

"The Convent of Lyons, founded in 1832, soon became one of the most flourishing in that large city. With the heart of the foundress, it possesses many of her writings, to be found nowhere else." * "There are preserved two autographic copies of the vows of the holy Mother, written and signed with her blood—her chaplet—scapular—her prayer book; another, which she used, entitled *The Holy Favor of Jesus*—one of her dresses. The chapel of the convent enjoys, as

* Order of the Incarnate Word and of the Blessed Sacrament.

did the old one, the daily plenary indulgence of Our Lady of Fourviéres.

"Already, in 1840, this house could give of its spiritual and temporal superabundance, and endow Belmont, in the department of the Loire, with a convent and school, that are quietly prosperous.

"In March, 1852, by formal consent of the Holy Father, it sent to Texas, of the United States of America, a first colony of religious, at the request of Monseigneur Odin." * The Convent of Brownsville, after having almost miraculously escaped the horrors of the civil war, was, in 1867, almost overthrown from top to bottom by a fearful tempest. Thanks to the sacrifices of other houses of the Order, and to the alms of Christian charity, it has been rebuilt, better than before.

The successor of Monseigneur Odin, Bishop Dubuis, long nourished the project of founding, at Victoria, a convent of the Incarnate Word; the central position of that town gave him the hope that the establishment would effect much good. "The courageous Mother St. Clare, who had presided at the foundation of Brownsville, undertook, in 1868, a voyage to Europe with the intention of recruiting subjects for the new foundation. With this intention, she did not fear to land on the shores of Protestant England, and found there, in fact, Irish postulants. In August she was in Lyons. In June, 1864, her colony crossed the ocean. On the 18th of December of the same year the Bishop proceeded to Brownsville to preside over the elections of the two establishments, and to take back with him the subjects destined for the foundation of Victoria. Mother Saint Ange was retained as Superioress of the former convent, and Mother St. Clare sent, with four sisters and two

* Order of the Incarnate Word and of the Blessed Sacrament.

lay-sisters, to work at the second house, where they were warmly expected." *

As generally happens, the work grew in the midst of trials, but, purified and strengthened by them, Victoria is the most flourishing house of the Order in Texas.

In writing these pages, we had asked of the pious daughters of the Incarnate Word at Lyons some notes to guide us in the account of the foundations made by their house in the New World. We transcribe them here. This simple exposition, besides making them colaborers in a work in which they have taken a sisterly interest, will explain, in a natural manner, by what providential ways the Order was led to extend the sphere of its work, and to open its tent to shelter new wants.

"Some years after the foundation of Victoria, a new colony was sent to *Corpus Christi*. That city, which is the see of a Bishop, since Texas was divided into three dioceses, possessed no establishment in which children could receive a Catholic education.

"The city of Houston, which, by its singularly good situation, is destined to great importance, and of which the population is yearly increased by thousands of inhabitants, beheld Protestant schools multiplying and not a single Catholic institution to counterbalance the influence of heresy. Monseigneur Dubuis wished, at all hazards, to master the situation. He had recourse to the Incarnate Word. Victoria, which recruited its numbers rapidly, furnished excellent subjects, whose devotion and success soon placed them in the first rank of Catholic schools, whilst their fervor established the convent on a solid religious basis.

* Order of the Incarnate Word and of the Blessed Sacrament.

"The institution of the Sisters of the Charity of the Incarnate Word dates from the year 1866. It was in this year that Bishop Dubuis undertook a voyage to Europe, having, for chief motive, to take back with him Sisters of Charity, to whom he could confide the care of the sick, and of abandoned children. The efforts of the holy prelate were not successful; only one Community promised him subjects, and even these, at the moment of departure, were refused to him. At this news, the heart of the venerable Bishop was pierced. He could not endure returning to protestants, to whom he had promised that in Catholic countries he would find religious who would forsake their country in order to devote themselves to the care of their sick and their orphans. A prey to these sad thoughts, he came to our Reverend Mother Mary Angelica, the venerable restorer of our Convent of Lyons. He begged her to do for the suffering members of Jesus Christ what she had already done for souls plunged in the darkness of ignorance; to give to his distant mission Sisters of Charity, as she had already sent religious, devoted to prayer and to the education of youth. To attain this end, he proposed to our worthy Mother to give to some souls of good will, who had consented to follow him, the rules of the Third Order of the Incarnate Word, with a religious habit that should gain respect for them in the unbelieving land in which they would exercise their devotion. The heart of our venerable Mother was too well ordered not to enter into the trouble of the Apostle of Texas; she could not resist his prayers, and, with the sanction of the Archbishop of Lyons, she received into our house, until the time of departure, the first three subjects of the new Congregation, to which was given the name of the Charity of the Incarnate Word. Our constitutions, directory, ceremonial, and book of customs, were put into the

hands of the sisters, that they might study them at leisure, and see in what the works to which they were about to consecrate themselves would permit them to conform.

"Arrived in their mission, the Sisters of the Charity of the Incarnate Word occupied themselves at first in the care of the sick ; the confidence which they inspired was such that, in a short time, a large and splendid hospital was built for them, in which, whilst tending the body, they do great good for souls. At different times we have been able to forward recruits to Galveston. By help of these reinforcements, they have been able to begin an orphan asylum. When the sisters go to collect for the subsistence of their children, who are entirely dependent on them, they need bu t show themselves to receive abundant alms.

"Within three years of their departure from France, the Sisters of the Charity were enabled to found a new center of works of mercy at San Antonio, an important city that has since become the see of a Bishop. They established there, as at Galveston, an hospital and an orphan asylum, but their most fruitful work is that of small schools in the surrounding region. The sisters are sent out, three or four together, in the most considerable settlements, to instruct the children ; they remain dependent on the house at San Antonio, the Superioress of which visits them successively, and to which they return for the vacations. These small schools do a great good, without requiring sacrifices, which the mission would be unable to make, and thus afford to a great number of souls the advantages of Christian instruction.

"Doctor Arthaut had been charged by the Government to direct a new hospital for the insane which was being erected in the outskirts of Lyons. He was

acquainted with the remarkable aptitude for this kind of ministration possessed by one of the sisters of the Charity of the Incarnate Word, who had served for many years in the hospital of Antiquaille, in this difficult function. The good doctor, who is deeply religious, came to ask of our Reverend Mother whether it was possible to recall her to France when the new establishment would be opened, and to confide its care to the Sisters of the Charity of the Incarnate Word. Our worthy Mother gave him her promise, and, on the 2d of August, 1875, our sisters entered the Asylum of Bron, where they do good and prosper, in spite of the ill will of the radicals, who are forced to admire their devotion.

"Our sisters of Bron, as they depend on the civil administration, could not receive and form subjects at the asylum. For some time the house of Lyons served them as a house of recruiting, but this was but provisionally. Shortly after their installation at Bron, they bought, at Villeurbane, a neighboring locality, a property on which to establish their Novitiate; there the numerous subjects sent to them by Providence pass the first part of their religious probation, awaiting the time when they shall be prepared to essay the life of devotion to which they seek to consecrate themselves.

"In 1876 the Superioress of Galveston came to France with the rules which the Sisters of the Charity had drawn from ours, and which they had observed for ten years. Bishop Dubuis, who had interested himself in this redaction, wished that our venerable Superior should give them a final revision before they were printed; this was done that same year."

Whilst the house of Lyons was extending its roots in the new world, that of Azerables was adorning its trunk, as yet frail, with green branches.

"Monseigneur de Tournefort, on one of his visits to Azerables, decided that it was necessary to make new foundations, so as to diminish expenses by decreasing the number of subjects. It was determined to establish convents at Saint-Junien and Saint-Yrieix in the Haute Vienne." *

The house of Saint-Junien was founded in 1834, that of Saint-Yrieix in 1836. The first Superiors of these two houses, Mother Saint Augustine Gravier and Mother Saint-Etienne Moreau, had each a difficult task. "Having bought but ruins, they were obliged to build houses with scarcely other resources than their own labors, or other support than that of Providence. At Saint-Junien even bread was wanting, and for several months the sisters had only potatoes for their principal food. Many broke down under the strain. Notwithstanding numberless and incessant difficulties, the two houses have not ceased to advance, and they prove that the nothingness of our humility, by calling down the gifts of God, is a foundation more solid than the weak support of men." *

The colonies founded by the house of Azerables have not been slow in producing, in their turn, new generations, who pursue their way in humility and charity. The house of Saint-Benoit-du-Sault (Indre) failed in the first attempt at establishment, as though God wished to reserve the right of seniority for that of Évaux. By a touching coincidence, it was Évaux that gave it life in 1852. The ancient Benedictine convent, with its magnificent outlook, its vast inclosure, its dependencies, has become once more the house of prayer, and of zeal for the help of souls, especially in the education of youth ; it is surrounded by the sympathies of a faithful population, and prospers under the

* Order of the Incarnate Word and of the Blessed Sacrament.

eye of God. Évaux also founded, in the next year, Chatetus-Malvaleix (Creuse). The Convent of Saint-Junien, in 1863, sent some of its daughters to Grand-Bourg (Creuse), and from this last the winds of grace wafted the precious seed of the Order to Limoges, in 1872, and, two years later, to Sancerre (Cher).

This is the list of the new houses of the Incarnate Word, in the order of their foundation:

CONVENTS.

Azerables (Creuse), in 1807.
Évaux (Creuse), in 1827.
Lyons (Rhone), in 1832.
Saint-Junien (Haute Vienne), in 1834.
Saint-Yrieix (Haute Vienne), in 1836.
Belmont (Loire), in 1840.
Brownsville (Texas), in 1852.
Saint-Benoit-du-Sault (Cher), in 1852.
Chatetus-Malvaleix (Creuse), in 1853.
Le Grand-Bourg (Creuse), in 1863.
Victoria (Texas), in 1866.
Houston (Texas), in 1870.
Corpus Christi (Texas), in 1871.
Limoges (Haute Vienne), in 1872.
Sancerre (Cher), in 1874.
Hallettsville (Texas), in 1881.

HOUSES OF THE CHARITY.

PRINCIPAL CENTRES.

Galveston (Texas), in 1866.
San Antonio (Texas), in 1869.
Bron (Rhone), in 1875.

And now let us close this book by paying a tribute of gratitude to the holy priest, who received from on high the mission of restoring to the Church the jewel, lost for a time, that had been shown to Mother de Matel as one of the gems of the pontifical tiara.

"M. Denis is, as ever, the holy priest," wrote, in 1825, Mother du Bourg, a competent judge in such a case; "he lives rather in heaven than on earth, and is often in ecstasy and rapture. He is one of the souls on earth most favored by God. It is astonishing that in the midst of so much business he still finds time for contemplation." Touching things are related of his power with God. Mother Saint-Paul Deschamp was attacked by a severe and obstinate leprosy, which resisted all the resources of art; Father Denis made the sign of the cross, with his thumb, on the hardened flesh, and the evil disappeared, the mysterious mark of the thumb alone remaining.

In 1832, named titulary canon of the Cathedral of Limoges, at the age of 71, he was admired as a model priest. "Silent in the sacristy, where he behaved with the modesty of an angel, when he had to remain there, he never uttered one idle or useless word. Interiorly absorbed, he paid no attention to what passed around him. His docility to the master of ceremonies was that of a child; but, in his stall, his immobility was that of a statue. A young deacon, now Vicar Apostolic of Su-Tchuen, Monseigneur Pinchon, after having assisted him at the holy sacrifice, said: 'How familiarly that good old man speaks with God! He is truly a saint! Oh, how I would like to have that freedom of spirit with Our Lord!'

"The weight of years making his charge of canon too heavy for him, by the difficulty in attending the choir, a last impulse of charity made him resolve to

return to Azerables ; he wished to be useful by sharing the emoluments of his office with his spiritual family. In 1847 he retired to his beloved convent, and there returned his soul to God on the 12th of November, 1856, in the ninety-sixth year of his age. His body rests in a little tomb at the northeastern angle of the cemetery.'' *

* Order of the Incarnate Word and of the Blessed Sacrament.

APPENDIX.

We think it our duty to give the necrology of the first sisters who took their vows with Mother de Matel in 1635.

"Sister Elizabeth Grasseteau, after a life remarkable for its great innocence, died at Lyons, in the odor of sanctity, June 21st, 1646.

"Sister Francis Gravier, whom the foundress had chosen for her secretary, an employment that enabled her to render the greatest service to the Order, died at Lyons, July 2d, 1675.

"Sister Mary Nallard, long engaged in the embarrassing office of Superioress, never lost any of that religious simplicity that is so seldom united with authority. A death, precious in the sight of God, crowned her life in the Convent of Paris, of which she was Superioress in 1655.

"Sister Catherine Richardon strove to follow her model, the Incarnate Word, in the continual exercise of obedience. She died at Avignon in 1649.

"Sister Jeanne Fiot, after having been chosen to establish regularity in three convents, at their foundation, obtained permission to end her days at Avignon, where she died the death of the just towards the end of December, 1691.

"Sister of the Cross de la Verpiniére, who sacrificed the greatest worldly advantages to walk in the footsteps of the Incarnate Word, was Superior of the Convent of Paris when God called her to Him, July 29th, 1671, some months after the death of the foundress.

"Sister Mary Chaud, who shared for a long time with the foundress the persecutions excited against the Order at Paris, died there, in the exercise of heroic patience, July 10th, 1688.

"Sister Francis Coulomb died without having been able to consummate her sacrifice by the religious profession." *

* Life by a Jesuit Father.

EPHEMERIDES

OF THE LIFE OF MOTHER DE MATEL.

An asterisk (*) indicates that the year is not known, or that the fact took place in more than one year at that date.

JANUARY.

1. * —Communications on the Incarnate Word.
1. 1642—Jesus Christ appears to Jeanne in the Communion, and covers her with His Blood.
1. 1644—Cloister established in the Convent of Paris.
1. 1652—Our Lord offers Himself as a New Year's gift to Jeanne.
2. 1625—Ecstatic sleep for two hours.
6. 1625—Our Lord offers her the cross, and reveals to her the excellencies and trials of His Order.
6. 1652—Our Lord declares that He is her habit, and consoles her for not being a religious.
6. 1658—Our Lord introduces her to the Divine cellar, and pours out for her a royal wine.
15. 1625—In an ecstasy she receives an order to give a red mantle to her daughters.
18. 1643—A sweet odor accompanies her, signifying the efficacy of her prayers.
21. 1644—After a fall, she reposes on the bosom of Our Lord.
21. * —Contemplation on St. Agnes.
24. * —Contemplation on St. Paul.

FEBRUARY.

5. * Contemplation on St. Agatha.
5. 1636—Mary Margaret, obeying Jeanne, hears the voices of the Angels.

6. * —Contemplation on St. Dorothy.
12. 1660—Gaston d'Orleans appears to her.
24. * —Contemplation on St. Matthew.
26. * —She is instructed on her mission as Apostle of the Word.

MARCH.

7. * —Contemplation on St. Thomas of Aquin.
9. 1626—Death of her mother.
12. * —Contemplation on St. Gregory.
18. 1653—Return to the convent after the second civil war.
18. * —Contemplation on St. Gabriel.
19. * —Contemplation on St. Joseph.
20. 1650—Vision concerning M. de la Piardiére, and his vocation to the priesthood.
24. 1639—Vision of the approaching foundation of the Order.
25. * —Contemplation of the Incarnation.

APRIL.

9. 1639—St. Leo invites her to go to Avignon.
11. * —Contemplation on St. Leo, the Preacher of the Word.
22. 1640—She gives for the first time the little habit to Miss de Serviéres.
23. 1640—She quits Avignon, after the foundation.
30. 1627—She learns the approaching death of Monseigneur Miron, and that she will go to Paris.

MAY.

2. 1641—A luminous cross rests on her head.
3. 1654—Vision of a lamb in a forest.
3. * —Contemplation on the cross.
3. 1663—Departure from Lyons for the last time.
13. 1650—Death of Madame de la Piardiére.

14. 1650—Jeanne sees Madame de la Piardiére in glory.
18. 1643—She leaves Grenoble for Avignon.
20. 1643—Second entry into Avignon.
25. 1658—Last journey to Roanne.
27. 1643—Second departure from Avignon.
30. 1649—Investiture of Lucréce de Belly.

JUNE.

2. 1643—Return to Grenoble.
3. 1643—Commencement of the Convent at Grenoble.
6. 1625—Vanquished in an ecstasy, she consents to commence the Order.
11. 1646—Death of Elizabeth Grasseteau.
14. 1635—First vows.
21. 1637—Our Lord instructs her on the lost drachma.
22. 1625—Decision of Father Jacquinot in favor of the projected Order—Our Lord shows her the Scapular of the Order.
23. 1625—Our Lord, in the Ostensorium, bends towards and blesses her.
24. * —Contemplation on St. John Baptist.
28. * —Vision on the difficulties of the foundation.
29. * —Vision on the impotence of her enemies, and on Notre-Dame du Puy.
29. * —Contemplation on St. Peter.
30. 1632—Vision on St. Paul—She is elevated with him.
30. 1643—Departure from Grenoble for Lyons.

JULY.

2. 1625—Departure from her father's house.
* 1652—Long supplications for peace.
4. 1625—Ecstasy and vision concerning the mountain Gourguillon.
6. 1668—Bull dispensing her from the ordinary delays of the novitiate and the profession.

22. 1635—Apparition of the Child Jesus to Mother Mary Margaret.
* * —Contemplation on St. Mary Magdalen.
26. * —Contemplation on St. Ann.
30. 1627—Last interview with Monseigneur Miron.
31. * —Contemplation on St. Ignatius.

AUGUST.

4. * —Contemplation on St. Dominic.
5. 1627—Death of Monseigneur Miron.
6. * —Contemplation on the Transfiguration.
6. * —Jesus takes her heart before the Communion.
7. 1643—Second departure for Paris.
9. * —Vision concerning Louis XII.
12. * —Vision on the mystic clock, and the hour of the advent of her Order.
15. 1643—Second arrival at Paris.
15. * —Contemplation on the Assumption.
16. 1636—She asks for the contagion of holy love.
16. 1643—Our Lord, in the arms of His Holy Mother, presents her two golden keys.
18. 1663—The lamentable scene of the contract.
20. * —Contemplation on St. Bernard.
22. 1620—She begins to communicate daily.
24. 1620—She sees herself dressed in white, and baptized in the Precious Blood.
24. 1634—Our Lord applies to her the praise of the strong woman.
24. * —Contemplation on St. Bartholomew.
25. 1620—Our Lord invites her to enter His side, as an hospital for the poor.
26. 1620—She is elevated to the rank of Mystic Spouse.
27. 1620—Vision of the table, the statue, and the mysterious chandeliers.
28. * —Contemplation on St. Augustine.

SEPTEMBER.

4. 1670—Her Investiture.
5. 1638—She sees Louis XIV. on the night that he is born.
7. 1642—Our Lord assures her of De Thou's salvation.
7. 1644—He praises her writings.
8. 1658—She leaves Roanne with great emotion.
* * —Contemplation on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
10. 1670—Her Profession.
11. 1670—Her death, precious in the sight of God.
13. 1644—Our Lord objects to her renouncing the foundation at Lyons.
14. 1628—She leaves Lyons for Paris.
21. * —Contemplation on St. Matthew.
23. 1653—The Blessed Virgin, in the form of a shepherdess, invites her to come to Lyons.
29. * —Communication on St. Michael—The angels sing the *Jesu, amor meus.*
30. * —Contemplation on St. Jerome.

OCTOBER.

2. * —Contemplation on the Holy Angels.
3. 1627—The birth of Louis XIV. promised to her.
4. * —Contemplation on St. Francis of Assissium.
18. 1653—Second departure from Paris.
18. * —Contemplation on St. Luke.
20. 1655—First visit of Monseigneur de Neuville to the house at Lyons.
21. 1655—St. Ursula treats her as a sister and encourages her.
23. 1621—She learns that Henry IV. is saved.
31. 1643—Entry into the Convent of Paris.
31. 1654—St. Peter carries a lamb; she is invited to the sacrifice.

NOVEMBER.

1. 1639—Arrival of the first sisters at Avignon.
1. 1643—Blessing of the convent at Paris.
1. * —Numerous favors.
6. 1596—Her happy birth.
6. 1639—Vision of the instruments of the Passion—in flame.
6. 1639—She enters into a rapture in the parlor, and her countenance becomes luminous.
17. 1639—Departure for Avignon.
18. 1642—St. Denis calls her to Paris.
21. 1639—Arrival at Avignon.
25. * —Contemplation on St. Catherine.
29. 1628—First arrival in Paris.
29. 1632—Departure from Paris.
29. 1643—Our Lord causes her to repose on His bosom.
30. * —Contemplation on St. Andrew.

DECEMBER.

3. * Contemplation on St. Francis Xavier.
3. 1641—Cardinal Richelieu carries off her papers.
4. 1635—Arrival of Mary Margaret and her companions.
6. 1640—She sees St. Peter near the grating in Avignon.
8. 1619.—Great light on the Immaculate Conception. The Order engaged to defend it.
11. 1632—Second entry into Lyons.
13. * —Contemplation on St. Lucy.
15. 1619—The Blessed Virgin indicates her first house.
15. 1639—First novices at Avignon.
16. 1640—First profession at Avignon.
18. 1643—Mysterious dedication.
21 1618—Communication of the Holy Ghost in an ecstasy.

21. * —Contemplation on St. Thomas.
21. 1641—She sees Jeanne de Chantal in glory.
24. 1639—Our Lord compares her to Ruth.
25. * —A day of great favors.
26. * —Communications on St. Stephen.
27. —Communications on St. John.
28. 1643—Apparition of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord.
28. 1643—Spiritual familiarity with the Holy Innocents.

Index to Second Volume.

BOOK FIFTH.

Jeanne de Matel, Foundress.

CHAPTER I.

Jeanne de Matel and the Religious Life . . . Page 1

Idea of the religious life.—The net.—The Sacred Heart and the dove-cote.—The Spouse.—Generous inability to draw back.—Complete self-abandonment.—Beautiful consequence.—Biblical images.—The virginal mirror.—Heavenly music.—A convent, the court of the Lamb.—The religious life in God.—The religious life in the Incarnate Word.—The religious life in the Blessed Sacrament.—Obligation.—Imitation of the life of Jesus Christ.—Poverty, chastity, obedience, light, crucifixion.—St. Joseph, model of the religious life.—The world forgotten.—The parlor.—The edification of their happiness.—Worldly titles.—The privileges of the elders.—Holy indifference.—Relaxation.—The flax still smoking.

CHAPTER II.

Character, Constitution and Spirit of the Order of the Incarnate Word . . . . . Page 23

Truth of Jeanne's mission as foundress.—Affirmed by Our Lord.—Prophetic views.—The Order an extension of the Incarnation.—The Gospel of Love.—Its second character, its Apostleship.—The tabernacle of crystal.—First name of the Congregation.—Summary of the Constitutions.—Spirit of the Order. Imitation of the Incarnate Word; union with Him.—Letters of Mother de Matel on that Spirit.—Sentiments in time of contradiction and of grace.—Milk and blood.—Exterior mortification.—Interior mortification.—Confraternity of the Incarnate Word.—Bond of unity.—Promises, the future.

CHAPTER III.

The Costume of the Order of the Incarnate Word . . . . . Page 42

The vesture of the strong woman: strength and beauty.—The robe of Joseph.—The Holy Trinity.—The rainbow of God's

Throne.—The colors of the Passion.—The Three provinces of Christ's Empire. "Clothe yourselves with Jesus Christ."—The scapular, figure of the Cross.—*Amor meus.*—The Ephod and the Rational.—The Propitiatory.—The Cincture.—The cords of the Passion.—The royal purple.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FATHERS OF THE INCARNATE WORD . . . . . Page 48

Project of the Constitution drawn up by Mother de Matel.—Summary.—Hospitality.—Solitude, prayer, work.—Apostolate and education.—Perpetual adoration.—Costume.—Personnel.—Regime.—Hierarchy.—Essays of establishment.—Has the hour come.

BOOK SIXTH.

LAST YEARS OF JEANNE DE MATEL AND HER DEATH (1655-1670.)

CHAPTER I.

FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE CONVENT OF LYONS TO JEANNE'S THIRD VOYAGE TO PARIS (1655-1663) Page 60

No Concealments.—Death of Mother Nallard, Superior at Paris.—They seek her successor.—Sister of Calvary Gérin.—Her antecedents.—First triennial term of Mother de Belly as Superior of Paris.—Project of foundation at Roanne.—Voyage and sojourn of Mother de Matel.—Promises of Our Lord.—Occupation of the Foundress.—Sister of Calvary Gérin named Superior at Paris.—Her character.—Jeanne's opposition.—Management of Mother Gérin.—Death of M de la Piardiére.—His eulogy.—Third voyage of Jeanne to Paris.

CHAPTER II.

MOTHER DE MATEL AND THE CONVENT OF PARIS.—PERSONAL TRIALS AND PERSECUTIONS . . . . Page 75

Reception of Mother de Matel.—"I go to my execution."—Unjust pretensions of the Superioress.—Jeanne refuses to sign a contract injurious to her own name and to the Order, and dangerous.—Their insistence.—Beautiful example of religious discretion and charity.—Pressed to sign an act of donation.—She is satiated with opprobrium.—Deprived of Father Bernardon's counsels.—Sister Francis Gravier removed from her.

CHAPTER III.

SAME CONTINUED . . . . . Page 87

The relatives of Mother de Matel at Paris.—Signature of the odious contract.—Sister Gravier sent to Lyons.—Sister Mary Chaud.—Sister de Belly.—A fresh trait of Mother de Matel's discretion.—Refusal to enregister the Letters Patent.—Mother Gérin sent back to Grenoble.—Mother Sorel succeeds her. Her character.—Registration of the Letters Patent again compromised.—Decree of Parliament concerning some convents.—Mother de Belly again elected Superioress.—She can neither change the contract, nor enregister the letters.—Jeanne authorized to make her profession without noviceship.—Why she does not profit by it.—Human patronage of the Convent of Paris.—Opposition of Heaven.

CHAPTER IV.

JEANNE DE MATEL AND THE CONVENT OF PARIS.—
ITS TROUBLES . . . . . Page 99

Precautions against the possibility of suppression.—Resolutions on account of insufficient foundations.—Mother Saint-Ursule.—Madame Lenet.—Her intrigues.—Suppression of small communities.—The Convent of the Incarnate Word to receive the homeless religious.—Election of a Superioress.—Intrusion of Madame Lenet.—Firmness of Mother de Belly and the sisters.—Mother de Belly expelled from the convent.—Protest.—New vexations.—Jeanne's friends effect her removal.

CHAPTER V.

LAST DAYS OF MOTHER DE MATEL.—HER DEATH . . Page 112

Disappointment of the persecutors.—Mother de Belly suffers on that account.—Mother de Matel badly lodged.—Her sufferings.—Brought back to the convent.—Receives the Holy Viaticum.—Her words to Madame Lenet.—Her fervor.—The physician assigned her.—How Madame Lenet tends her.—Again Communicates, and takes the habit.—Receives Extreme Unction.—Makes her profession.—Her joy and her sufferings.—The tempter at the death bed of a saint.—Vision of Heaven.—The departure.—The globe of light.—The death bell.—The vesture of glory.—The book of the Constitutions.—Grief caused by the event.—The voice of the people.—Persecution after death.—Odor of sanctity.—The heart.—Sepulture.

BOOK SEVENTH.

Portrait, Spirit, and Virtues of Jeanne de Matel.

CHAPTER I.

Portrait of Mother de Matel. . . . . Page 125

Portrait by a former historian.—Supernatural qualities.—Appreciation by Father Gibalin.—Doubt of the Abbé de Saint-Just.—Appreciation by M. Bernardon.—Her soul depicted in her letters.—Aptitude for temporal affairs.—Other supernatural qualities.—Her attractive conversation.—Character.

CHAPTER II.

The Writings of Mother de Matel . . . . . Page 139

She writes by obedience.—"*Bene scripsisti de me.*"—Disinterestedness.—Supernatural source.—The diamond multiplied.—Veneration of her contemporaries.—The Religious of the Incarnate Word.—Absence of studied style.—And yet its beauty.—Examples.—Sacred Scripture once more.—The wonderful archives. —Varied tone.— Enthusiasm ; Examples.—Unction and sweetness ; Examples.—The sublime; examples.—Grace ; examples.—Comparisons.—Treatises on morality and direction.—Their characters.—Her writings a feeble echo of her speech.—Apparent defects.—Perpetual Secretary.—Authenticity and integrity.

CHAPTER III.

Spiritual Theology of Mother de Matel . . . Page 166

She still speaks.—The divine net.—Water.—The guardians of the vineyard.—Temptation.—Sin.—Grace.—The way of the Saints.—The four chains of souls.—Pure love.—Sacrifice.—Indifference to the glory of God.—Discouragement.—Ascension of souls.—Dryness and interior desolation.—Distractions.—Pride and humility.—Treatise of the Eight Beatitudes.—Analysis of that work.—Peace.—Kindness.—Poverty.—Purity of heart.—Mercy.—Tears.—Hunger and thirst for justice.—Persecution for justice sake.—Humility.—Sensual inclinations.—Love of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER IV.

Her Faith. . . . . Page 187

Shortness of this chapter.—The simplicity of her faith.—Pious anxiety of her faith.—Its humility.—The *Credo* signed

in her blood.—God everywhere.—The heavenly contagion.—The feast of the espousals and religious nuptials.—The mother and the nurse.

CHAPTER V.

HER HOPE AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD . . . . . Page 191

His Order a work of confidence.—Its energy.—Holy indifference.—The key, the pearl, the manna.—Divine support.—The Lord sensible to her tears.—Bearing the cross.—The spur of clemency.—Holy liberty.—The rod of sadness.

CHAPTER VI.

HER LOVE OF GOD . . . . . Page 196

Knowledge leads to love.—The holy folly of the Word.—The two movements of love.—Tender effusions.—The little girl.—The key, the necklace, the *Agnus Dei*.—Overwhelming passion.—The slave and the victim.—Arius.—Consecration.—Struggle against natural inclinations.—Ineffable struggle.—"My heart! My Love!"—The house of the Archer.—The heart of St. Gertrude.—The law of love sensibly graven on the heart of Jeanne.—The union of the diamond.—Martyr to suffering.—Martyr to desire.—Tears of love.—Flames of Love.

CHAPTER VII.

HER CHARITY TOWARDS HER NEIGHBOR . . . . . Page 210

Sacrifice of money.—Beautiful example.—Love of the people.—Habit of sympathy and condescendence.—Indulgence and goodness.—Love of souls.—Canals, sins, the standard-bearer, the ship.—Grace of conversion.—M. de Priézac.—M. de Rossignol.—Dulaurier.—Heroic desires.—Love of the priesthood.—Love of her daughters.—Love for young girls.—Touching examples.—Counsels.—The souls of Purgatory.

CHAPTER VIII.

HER PIETY . . . . . Page 231

Habits of prayer.—The house of the Father.—Gratitude for graces received. The feast of the Holy Trinity.—Devotion to the Holy Ghost.—Devotion to the Pope.—At the foot of the Tabernacle.—Method of hearing Mass.—Ishmael and Agar.—Spiritual Communion.—Sacramental Communion.—The beggar of the Communion.—The fountain of life and grace.—Fervor.—Holy desires.—The Sacred Heart.—She is its songstress.—She dwells in it.—The hospital of grace.—The five fountains.—

Tender effusions.—Affectionate exhortations on devotion to the Sacred Heart.

CHAPTER IX.

HER HUMILITY . . . . . Page 249

Her simplicity in dress.—Apparent contradiction.—The magnificat of humility.—Proud humility.—Feeling and confession of her own misery and nothingness.—Humility in the midst of spiritual consolations and favors.—Simple, candid, tender humility.—Humility betrayed.—Humiliations.—Her willingness to speak of God.—"Love to be ignored."—Panegyric of her humility.—Submission and dependence on her directors.—Diffidence of self.—Calmness in opprobriums.

CHAPTER X.

HER PATIENCE . . . . . Page 269

In sickness.—Efforts to found the Order.—The heart of the Mother and its trials.—The Convent of Paris, theatre of her patience.—Her refusal of all relief.—The contract of suffering.—Her firmness.—Her gift of consolation.

CHAPTER XI.

HER MORTIFICATION AND OBEDIENCE . . . . . Page 278

The cross planted in her heart.—Corporal mortifications.—Docility in mortification.—Mortification of the will.—Mortification of the parlor.—Spirit of mortification in festivals.—Mortifying buffets of Satan.—Obedience.—Holy eagerness.—The sacrificial feast.

CHAPTER XII.

HER POWER OF INTERCESSION . . . . . Page 286

Father Ignatius.—Cure of Fathers Pontian and de Meaux.—Of the children of M. de Serviéres.—Promotion of Cardinal Richelieu to the See of Lyons.—Cure of Father Millien.—Séguier saved from a great danger.—Just fication and cure of a servant girl.—Cure of one born blind.—Help to mothers of family.—The remedy of God.—Cure of Lucretia de Belly.—Of the Abbé de Saint-Just.—Of Marie de la Piardiére.—Of another child.—Of Sister Gravier.—Of Michel Lemirre.—Of Mother Nallard.—Of M. Prioult.—Of Reverend Father Le Blanc.—Of other persons.—Of Madame Marcilly.—Of Sister of the Blessed Sacrament Alouis.—Of Father Surin.—Of young du Soleil.—Of Miss Dubois.—Of Miss Bignon.—Her efficacious prayers for the people.—Chastisements of her persecutors.

CHAPTER XIII.

HER SPIRIT OF PROPHECY . . . . . Page 309

Guarantee of authenticity.—She knows that she will go to Paris.—She foretells continued life to the Pope, and the Archbishop of Paris.—Announces Séguier's elevation.—Foretells to M. de Bosquet that he will be a Bishop.—Consoles Madame de Serviéres by predicting the birth of a child.—Predictions concerning Cardinal Richelieu of Lyons.—Predicts approaching death of a religious.—Supernatural knowledge of De Thou's conspiracy and death.—The death of Louis XIII.—That of a holy lady.—Sees Cardinal Richelieu after his death.—Predicts the fate of the Convent of Paris, and that of her daughters.

CHAPTER XIV.

JEANNE DE MATEL AND THE ROYAL HOUSE OF FRANCE . . . . . Page 319

Situation of France under Louis XIII.—Wars of religion.—Visions in regard to the war.—Siege of La Rochelle.—The tree of the *fleurs-de-lis.—Justus germinabit sicut lilium.*—Birth of Louis XIV.—Jeanne's visions on that occasion.—Henry IV.—The *fleur-de-lis.*—Illness and cure of Louis XIII.—Gaston d' Orleans.—Kindness of Anne of Austria for Mother de Matel and her daughters.

BOOK EIGHTH.

MOTHER DE MATEL'S WORK DOWN TO OUR TIMES.

CHAPTER I.

MOTHER DE MATEL'S WORK DOWN TO THE REVOLUTION . . . . . Page 333

Sister Gravier ill treated.—The goods of the convent adjudged to the general hospital.—The Order's opposition.—The cause pleaded in Parliament.—Brutal expulsion and dispersion of the religious.—Chastisement of those who were concerned in the ruin.—First translation of the remains of the foundress.—Their translation to Avignon.—Translation of the foundation of Grenoble, to Sarrian, then to Orange and Rocquemaure.—Convent of Anduze.—Destruction of the Order at the Revolution.

CHAPTER II.

RESTORATION OF THE ORDER OF THE INCARNATE WORD . . . . . Page 348

The Incarnate Word and St. Martial.—The Abbé Denis.—His two exiles.—His return.—Named Curate of Azerables in the diocese of Limoges.—His fervor.—He founds a Community.—Its edifying life.—Progress and obstacles.—Mother of the Holy Ghost Chinard-Durieur, formerly of the Incarnate Word, of Lyons, comes to Azerables.—The habit and Constitutions of the Order assumed.—Mother Quiquerant-Beaujeu comes from Avignon.—She brings the remains of the foundress.—Mother Dechamps comes from Lyons.—The grain of mustard seed.

CHAPTER III.

THE ORDER OF THE INCARNATE WORD FROM ITS RESTORATION TO OUR OWN TIMES . . . . . Page 358

Foundation of Evaux.—Madame Dubourg and Miss du Rivaux.—Foundation of Lyons.—The Abbé Saltier and Mother Mary-Angelica.—Foundation of Belmont.—Foundation of Brownsville.—Bishop Odin.—Foundation of Victoria.—Bishop Dubuis and Mother St. Clare.—Expansion of the foundation of Lyons.—Foundation of Corpus Christi.—Foundation of Hallettsville.—Sisters of the Charity of the Incarnate Word.—Foundation of Galveston.—Foundation of San Antonio.—The little schools.—Foundation of Bron.—Expansion of the foundation of Azerables.—Foundation of Saint-Junien.—Foundation of Saint-Yrieix.—Foundation of St. Benoit-du-Sault.—Foundation of Chatelus-Malvaleix.—Foundation of Grand-Bourg.—Foundation of Limoges.—Foundation of Sancerre.—List of the houses of the Order in 1882.—Last years and death of Father Denis.

Appendix . . . . . Page 371

Ephemerides . . . . . Page 381

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

AGNES (Saint). Vision on the day of the feast, Vol. I., p. 364.

ALMS. See love of neighbor.

ALOUIS (Sister). Cured through prayers of Jeanne, Vol. II., p. 303.

AMBROSE (Saint). Motive of Jeanne's devotion to the holy doctor, Vol. I., p. 363.

ANGELS (Holy). Jeanne's devotion to the Holy Angels, Vol I.., p. 325 and following. Thoughts on the Holy Angels, Vol. I., p. 328. Office of the Holy Angels, Vol. I., p. 330. Their presence, Vol. II., p. 161.

ANN (Saint). Jeanne consecrated to her, Vol. I., p. 7. Thoughts on St. Ann, Vol. I., p. 338.

ANNE OF AUSTRIA. Shows herself favorable to the Order, Vol. I., p. 171. Her good will towards Jeanne and her daughters, Vol. II., p. 331.

ASSISTANT. What she is in the Community, Vol. II., p. 6.

AVIGNON. Foundation of the Convent, Vol. I., p. 140. The remains of Mother de Matel transferred there, Vol. II., p. 342.

AZERABLES. Foundation of its convent, Vol. II., p. 354.

BEATITUDES. Treatise on the Beatitudes, Vol. II., p. 180.

BELLS. They announce of themselves the death of Jeanne, Vol., II., p. 122.

BELLY (M. de). His conversion, Vol. I., p. 149. His love for the Order of the Incarnate Word, Vol. I., p. 150.

BELLY (Sister Jeanne de). As a child attaches herself to Mother de Matel, Vol. I., p. 153. Sent to Grenoble, thence to Paris, Vol. I., p. 205. Refuses the Superiorship, Vol. II., p. 62. Accepts, Vol. II., p. 65. Abdicates, Vol. II., p. 69. Her delicate situation during the persecution of Mother de Matel, Vol. II., p. 82. Again named Superioress, Vol. II., p. 95. Her trials, Vol. II., p. 96. Her cure obtained by Jeanne, Vol. II., p. 292.

BELMONT. Foundation, Vol. II., p. 362.

BERNARDON (M.). He sees Jeanne environed by light, Vol. I., p. 132. He sees her transfixed by an arrow, Vol. I., p. 158. Obliged to quit Paris, Vol. II., p. 84. His testimony in her regard, Vol. II., p. 129.

BERTIN (Father). The erection of the Order, Vol. I., p. 97.

BÉTHISY DE MÉZIÉRES (Madame de). Her part in the translation of the remains of the foundress, Vol. II., p. 340.

BISHOPS. Their confidence in Mother de Matel, Vol. I., p. 144.

BLAISE (Saint). Jeanne's devotion to the Saint, Vol. I., p. 363.

BONVALOT (Father). Recognizes the vocation of Catherine Fleurin, and the truth of her communications, Vol. I., p. 67.

BOUFFIN (Abbé). Prior of Croisil; his piety, Vol. I. p. 175.

BOUSQUET (Abbé). Jeanne predicts his elevation to the Episcopacy, Vol. II., p. 312.

BRACHET (Dom). He sends the deed of erection for the Convent of Paris, Vol. I., p. 186. Canonically establishes it, Vol. I. p. 191.

CARANAVE (Father). His part in translating the remains of Mother de Matel, Vol. II., page 339.

CARMEL. Jeanne thinks of entering that Order, Vol. I., p. 46.

CARRÉ (Father). Called to direct Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 101. Light that he receives, Vol. I., p. 102. Insists on her return to Paris, Vol. I., p. 182.

CATHARINE (Saint). Jeanne prays to her that she may learn to read, Vol. I., p. 14.

CÉRISY (Abbé de). His part in the foundation of Paris, Vol. I., p. 181. Named Father Superior of that convent, Vol. I., p. 191.

CHAUD (Sister Mary). Her decided attitude in Jeanne's persecution, Vol. II., p. 90.

CHASTISEMENTS. Inflicted on Jeanne's persecutors, Vol. II., p. 337.

CHINARD-DURIEUX (Mother). Comes to Azerables, Vol. II., p. 354.

CLARE (Saint). Her interest in the Order of the Incarnate Word, Vol. I., p. 355.

COHON (Bishop). Presides at the first investiture, Vol. I. p. 146. His appreciation of Mother de Matel, Vol. II., p. 132.

COLOMBERT (Abbé). Presides at Jeanne's profession, Vol. II., p. 119. Conveys her heart to Avignon, Vol. II., p. 124.

COMMUNION. Jeanne's first Communion, Vol. I., p. 17. Daily Communion, Vol. I., p. 57. Exhortation to frequency, Vol. I.,p. 297. Her dispositions for holy Communion, Vol. II., p. 236. Method, Vol. II, p. 238. Effects, Vol. II., p. 242. Holy desire, Vol. II., p. 243.

COMPANY OF JESUS. See their different names. Her relations with, Vol. I.,p. 58. How, for awhile, abandoned by it, Vol. I., p. 92.

CONFIDENCE. See HOPE.

CONFRATERNITY of the Incarnate Word, Vol. II., p. 38.

CONSTITUTIONS of the Order, Book V., ch. 2.

CONTEMPLATION. Jeanne's first call, Vol. I., p. 16. She receives most wonderful communications, Vol. I., p. 50. Its nature; kinds; that of Jeanne; reality; degrees; various phenomena. See Vol. I., Book IV., ch. 1.

CONVENT. Of various cities. See their names.

COSTUME. First indication, Vol. I., p. 52. The mantle, Vol. I., p. 62. Indication of scapular,Vol. I., p. 67. Signification and symbolism of various parts, Vol. II., Book V., ch. 3.

COTTON (Father). His interviews with Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 61. His veneration for her, Vol. I., p. 61.

CREST (Father de). Decides the vocation of Mother Mary Margaret, Vol. I., p. 123.

CROSS. Cross and Passion of Our Lord; her meditation of, Vol. I.,p. 286. Beautiful thoughts,Vol. I., p. 288. The breasts of the cross, Vol. II., p. 151.

DEMON. Assaults Jeanne,Vol. I., p. 70. Knows the divinity of the Incarnate Word,Vol. I., p. 283. Tries to confound her, Vol. I., p. 327. His revolt against God, Vol. I., p. 329.

DENIS (Saint). Appears to Jeanne, Vol. I., pp. 181.

DENIS (Abbé). His life, exile, part in the restoration of the Order. (See Vol. II., Book VIII., ch. 2).

DIRECTORS. Their part in the foundation of the Order, Vol. I., p. 58. Office of the Director, Vol. II., p. 157. His merit, Vol. II., p. 167. Affection deserved by him, Vol. II., p. 190. Humility in his regard, Vol. II., p. 265. Obedience to him, Vol. II., p. 283.

DISCOURAGEMENT. (See HOPE).

DISCRETION (Religious). See RELIGIOUS LIFE.

DISTRACTIONS. Jeanne's thoughts, Vol. II., p. 178.

DRYNESS. Jeanne often experiences it, Vol. I., p. 253. Her doctrine on the subject, Vol. II., p. 178.

DUBOURG (Mother). Her part in the foundation of the Convent of Évaux, Vol. II., p. 358.

DULAURIER. He paints her portrait; her zeal for him, Vol. II., p. 218.

DUPONT (Father). Becomes her director, Vol. I., p. 61.

DUPRÈ (Madeline). Her history, Vol. I., p. 176.

ECONOME. See TREASURER.

ECSTASY. Frequent in the life of Mother de Matel, Vol. I., p. 245.

EUCHARIST. See BLESSED SACRAMENT.

ÉVAUX. Foundation of the Convent, Vol. II., p. 358.

FAITH. Her faith. See Vol. II., Book VII., ch. 4.

FATHERS (of Incarnate Word). See Vol. II., Book V., ch. 4.

FIGEANT (Marie). Jeanne's second companion, Vol. I., p. 51.

FIRMNESS. In her difficulties with Mother Gérin. See Vol. II., Book VI., ch. 2 and 3.

FIOT (Sister Jeanne of the Passion). Comes to Paris, Vol. I., p. 184. Named Superior, Vol. II., p. 62.

FLEURIN (Sister Catherine). Attaches herself to Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 63. Her visions on the foundations of the Order, Vol. I., p. 63. Raptures, Vol. I., p. 64. Her insistence, Vol. I., p. 65. Entrance into the Congregation, Vol. I., p. 70. Sent to Paris, Vol. I., p. 113. Takes the habit, Vol. I., p. 120. What she was, Vol. I., p. 227.

FLOTTE (Marchioness de). Influences Anne of Austria in favor of the Order, Vol. I., p. 171 Letter of Father Gibalin, Vol. II., p. 327.

FRANCIS OF ASSISSIUM (Saint). Jeanne consecrated to him, Vol. I., p. 7. His glories, Vol. I., p. 356.

GÉRIN (Mother). Her character, Vol. II., p. 63. Her ambition, Vol. II., p. 64. Elected Superior of Paris, Vol. II., p. 69. Her portrait, Vol. II., p. 71. Her administration, Vol. II., p. 71. Indiscreet insistence with Mother de Matel, Vol. II., p. 76. (See Book VI., ch. 2 and 3). She goes as Superior to Grenoble, Vol. II., p. 92. She prevents all compromise at Paris, Vol. II., p. 334.

GERMAIN (Faubourg Saint). Its state before Jeanne erected there her convent, Vol. I., p. 186.

GIBALIN (Father). His opposition to the Order and subsequent conversion, Vol. I., p. 110. Effect of his knowledge of Jeanne's supernatural communications, Vol. I., p. 117. He confesses himself her pupil in theology, Vol. I., p. 256. His authentic testimony, Vol. II., p. 127. He testifies to her humility, Vol. II., pp. 258, 264. His letter on her supernatural visions concerning Louis XIV., Vol. II., p. 327.

GLORY. Theology of, Vol. I., p. 290.

GOD. See TRINITY.

GONDI (John Francis de). His character, Vol. I., p. 103. Delay in approving the Order, Vol. I., p. 104.

GOURGILLON. Origin of the name, Vol. I., p. 130.

GRACE, Theology of, Vol. I., p. 260. Union with, Vol. II., p. 167.

GRASSETEAU (Sister Elizabeth). She follows Jeanne to Lyons, Vol. I., p. 106. Her attachment to her vocation, Vol. I., p. 118. She sees Jeanne reclining on the bosom of the Incarnate Word, Vol. I., p. 190. Her death, virtues; Jeanne's regrets, Vol. I., p. 199.

GRAVIER (Sister Francis). She sees Madame de la Piardiére in glory, Vol. I., p. 207. Separated from the foundress, Vol. II., p. 84. Sent to Lyons, Vol. II., p. 89. Returns to Paris, Vol. II., p. 93. Episode in her office as Secretary, Vol. II., p. 109. Cure obtained by Jeanne, Vol. II., p. 297. Predictions in her regard, Vol. II., p. 318. They are verified, Vol. II., p. 333.

GRENOBLE. History of the foundation of the Convent, Vol. I., p. 169. Its trials, Vol. I., p. 179. Translation of the foundation, Vol. II., p. 344.

GUÉSNAY (Father). His part in the establishment of the Order, Vol. I., p. 135.

HEART (Sacred). It is shown to Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 239. Wound of, Vol. I., p. 288. Jeanne's devotion to, Vol. II., p. 244.

HELL. Jeanne's fear of it when a child, Vol. I., p. 12.

HOPE. The evil of discouragement, Vol. II., p. 174. Hope of Mother de Matel; see Vol. II., Book VII., ch. 5.

HUMILITY. Of Mother Mary Margaret, Vol. I., p. 122. Of Mother de Matel, Vol. I., p. 156. Thoughts on, Vol. II., p. 179. Its eulogy, practice, Vol. II., p. 184. Humility of Jeanne; see Vol. II., Book VII., ch. 9.

IGNATIUS (Saint). Thoughts on him and on his mission, Vol. I., p. 356.

IGNATIUS (Father). Reception of Jeanne at Orleans, Vol. I., p. 87. Graces obtained for him, Vol. II., p. 286.

INCARNATION. Figured in a vision, Vol. I., p. 285. Supernatural view and theology of the mystery; see Vol. I., Book IV., ch. 3.

INDIFFERENCE. Sentiment of the religious life, Vol. II., p. 18. Culpable indifference, Vol. II., p. 174.

INNOCENTS (Holy). Jeanne's devotion, pious alliance, and thoughts upon them, Vol. I., p. 353.

JACQUINOT (Father). First direction of Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 59. Decides on her vocation, Vol. I., p. 67. Seems to condemn her, Vol. I., p. 92. Through obedience, abandons her for a while, Vol. I., p. 94.

JEANNE (Saint) de Chantal. Her spiritual union with Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 360. Jeanne's vision of her, Vol. I., p. 361.

JEROME (Saint). Appears to Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 362.

JOACHIM (Saint). Thoughts on him, Vol. I., p. 339.

JOHN (Saint, Evangelist). Jeanne's thoughts on him, and his privileges, Vol. I., p. 343. The Secretary of the Incarnate Word, Vol. II., p. 154.

JOHN (the Baptist). The patron of contemplative souls, Vol. I., p. 341.

JOSEPH (Saint). Thoughts of, Vol. I., p. 336. Model of a religious soul in its relations with the Incarnate Word, Vol. II., p. 11.

JUST (Abbé de Saint). His coldness to Jeanne on her return to Lyons, Vol. I., p. 220. How God answered his doubts of her spirit, Vol. II., p. 130. His cure obtained by Jeanne, Vol. II., p. 295.

KINDNESS. Its eulogy, Vol. II., p. 181.

LALANDE (Madame de). Wishes to be foundress, Vol. I, p. 98. Renounces the hope, Vol. I., p. 104.

LATIN. Her supernatural acquaintance with the Latin of Holy Scripture, Vol. I., p 31.

LENET (Madame de). History of her intrusion. See Vol. II., p. 101, Book VI., ch. 4. Her conduct during Jeanne's last days, Book VI., ch. 5. Her unfortunate end, Vol. II., p. 337.

LEO (Saint). He gives the signal for the foundation of the Order, Vol. I., p. 135.

NALLARD (Sister of the Holy Ghost). Goes to Paris, Vol. I., p. 184. Her piety and death, Vol. II., p. 61. Cure obtained by Jeanne, Vol. II., p. 298.

NEUVILLE (Monseigneur de). Delays the foundation of Lyons, Vol. I., p. 219. He makes the foundation, Vol. I., p. 226.

NOVICES (Mistress of). Vol. II., p. 6.

OBEDIENCE. Of Mother de Matel, Vol. I., pp. 105, 159. See Vol. II., Book VII., ch. 11.

OLIER (M.). Slight difference with Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 211. Her veneration for him, Vol. I., p. 212; Vol. II., p. 132.

PARDON OF INJURIES. See KINDNESS, PATIENCE.

PARIS. Jeanne arrives at Paris for the first time, Vol. I., p. 88. She leaves it, Vol. I., p. 106. Catharine Fleurin sent there, Vol. I., p. 113. Mary Margaret goes to aid her, Vol. I., p. 127. Account of the foundation of the convent there, Vol. I., p. 181. History of the convent and of its ruin. See Vol. II., Book VI. Jeanne's predictions in its regard, Vol. II., p. 317. Their accomplishment, Vol. II., p. 333.

PARLOR. How one should go to it, Vol. II., p. 16.

PASSION of Our Lord. See CROSS.

PATIENCE. Jeanne's patience, Vol. II., Book VII., ch. 10. See also SUFFERINGS, TRIALS, etc.

PAUL (Saint). Thoughts on St. Paul, Vol. I., p. 348.

PENANCE. See MORTIFICATION.

PETER (Saint). Thoughts on him, Vol. I., p. 345.

PIARDIÈRE (M. de la). Jeanne leads him to piety, Vol. I., p. 194. His kindness towards her, Vol. I., p. 203. He shelters her during the blockade of Paris, Vol. I., p. 203. Jeanne recognizes his vocation, Vol. I., p. 206. He is ordained priest, Vol. I., p. 209. Named Superior at Paris, and induces Jeanne to return to Lyons, Vol. I., p. 215. They seek to turn him against her, Vol. I., p. 223. Presides at the first investiture at Lyons, Vol. I., p. 227. His death and character, Vol. II., p. 72.

PIARDIÈRE (Madame de la). Her virtue and Christian death, Vol. I., p. 206. In glory, Vol. I., p. 207.

PIETY. Her precocious piety, Vol. I., p. 11. Its different forms. See Vol. II., Book VII., ch. 8.

PLAGUE. At Lyons, 1628, Vol. I., p. 84. At Grenoble, Vol. I., p. 179.

POIRÉ (Father). His good will for Jeanne and the Order, Vol. I., p. 108.

PORTRESS. What she is, Vol. II., p. 7.

PORTRAIT. Of Mother de Matel. See Vol. II., Book VII., ch. 1.

POVERTY. In the beginning of the Order, Vol. I., pp. 71, 139. Its eulogy, Vol. II., p. 181.

PRAYER. Jeanne's attraction for, Vol. I., p. 45. Power of her prayer, Vol. II., Book VII., ch. 12.

PRAYER (Mental). Jeanne learns it in the school of Our Lord, Vol. I., p. 38.

PREDESTINATION. See Vol. I., p. 7; Vol. I., p. 264.

PRIDE. See HUMILITY.

PRIESTHOOD. Jeanne's love of it, Vol II., p. 220.

PROFESSION (Religious). See RELIGIOUS LIFE.

PROPHECY. Jeanne announces the death of Monseigneur de Miron, Vol. I., p. 84. Sees at a distance a step taken in favor of the Order, Vol. I., p. 114. Another similar fact, Vol. I., p. 131. Predicts death of Richelieu, Vol. I., p. 164. Foresees conspiracy of Cinq-Mars, Vol. I., p. 163. Knows the dispositions of M. de Saint-Just, Vol. I., p. 220. Her spirit of prophecy, Vol. II., Book VII., ch. 8.

PURE (M. and Madame de). They receive Jeanne at Bermont and escort her to Paris, Vol. I., p. 85.

PURITY. How Our Lord guarded Jeanne's, Vol. I., p. 24. Its eulogy, Vol. II., p. 181.

PURGATORY. Souls of Purgatory, Vol. II., p. 229.

QUIQUERANT-BEAUJEU (Mother). She goes to Azerables, Vol. II., p. 355.

RAPTURE. Frequent in Jeanne's Life, Vol. I., p. 233.

READING. Influence of good reading, Vol. I., p. 15.

RELIGIOUS (Life). Jeanne reforms the religious of Dorien, Vol. I., p. 86. Inconvenience of priests interfering with interior life of religious houses, Vol. I., p. 112. Mother de Matel's views on the religious life. See Vol. II., Book V., ch. 1. A religious unfaithful to her rule, Vol. II., p. 161.

REVEL (M. and Madame de). Assume the initiative in founding the Convent of Grenoble, Vol. I., p. 169.

RICHELIEU (Cardinal Minister). Writes to his brother about Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 158. Visits her, Vol. I., p. 164. His death, Vol. 1, p. 167.

LINGENDES (Father de). Directs Mother de Matel, Vol. I., p. 91. Sustains her in her abandonment by the Society, Vol. I., p. 93. Has justice done to her, Vol. I., p. 96. Works for the establishment of the Order, Vol. I., p. 99. Advises her not to take the habit, Vol. I., p. 204.

LONGUEVILLE (Duchess de). Protectress of the Daughters of the Blessed Sacrament, and desires their union with the Incarnate Word, Vol. I., p. 99.

LOUIS DE GONZAGUE (Saint). Jeanne's devotion to him, Vol. I., p. 357.

LOUIS XIII. Jeanne's prediction concerning him, Vol. II., p. 315. His wars, Vol. II., p. 319. Other predictions concerning him, Vol. II., p. 320. She obtains his cure, Vol. II., p. 330.

LOUIS XIV. When a child signs the Letters Patent for the Convent of Grenoble, Vol. I., p. 171. Supernatural intervention of Jeanne in his birth, Vol. II., p. 322.

LOVE (of God). Jeanne's love of Him as a child, Vol. I, p. 13. Ardor of that love, Vol. I., p. 38. Examples of her daughters' love, Vol. II., p. 21. On the love God has for us, Vol. II., p. 145. Love that suffices, Vol. II, p. 145. Love a pass-key, Vol. II., p. 150. Love of God for souls, Vol., II., p. 184. Its excellence, Vol. II., p. 185. Jeanne's love of God, Vol. II., Book VI., ch. 6.

LOVE (of the neighbor). Love of the poor, Vol. I., p. 47. Love of Jeanne de Matel for her neighbor, Vol. II, Book VII., ch. 7.

LUCY (Saint). Appears to Mother de Matel, Vol. I., p. 363.

LYONS. House of Lyons seen in a vision, Vol. I., p. 81. State of the Congregation during her first visit to Paris, Vol. I., p. 105. Return and stay in Lyons, Vol. I., p. 106. Petition of the Lyonnese to the Cardinal Archbishop, Vol. I., p. 115. Several religious leave the house, Vol. I., p. 116. Fervor of the others, Vol. I., p. 118. Jeanne's benediction on the house, Vol. I., p. 119. More defections, Vol. I., p. 154. Weakening of the fervor, Vol. I., p. 154. Account of its foundation, Vol. I., p. 223. New foundation, Vol. II., p. 361.

MAGDALEN (Saint). Jeanne's familiarity with her, and her thoughts on the Saint, Vol. I., p. 350. She speaks of her, Vol. II., p. 153.

MARRIAGE. Jeanne called to the mystic marriage, Vol. I., p. 247.

MATEL (M. de). His family; his character; Vol. I., p. 9. He resists her vocation, Vol. I., p 20. His behavior on her leaving his house, Vol. I., p. 71. He insists on her returning to take her mother's place, Vol. I., p. 76. His reception of her at Paris, Vol. I., p. 88.

MATEL (Madame de). Trials and protection, Vol. I., p. 69. Jeanne's feelings for her, Vol. I., p. 48. She consents to her daughter's departure, Vol. I., p. 69. Her sickness, Vol. I., p. 74. Her edifying death, Vol. I., p. 74. Her piety, Vol. I., p. 75.

MEAUX (Father de). His direction, Vol. I., p. 60. How and why he is removed from Roanne, Vol. I., p. 61. Jeanne's letters to the Father, Vol. II., p. 157. She obtains his cure, Vol. II., p. 287.

MERCY. Its eulogy, Vol. II., p. 182.

MICHAEL (Saint). His intervention in a spiritual phenomenon of Jeanne's life, Vol. I., p. 41. How he becomes protector of the Order, Vol. I., p. 61. He appears bearing a sword and scales, Vol. I., p. 98. Often appears to Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 331. What God teaches her of this Holy Angel, Vol. II., p. 23.

MILLIEN (Father). Vainly solicits approbation of the Order, Vol. I., p. 114. Jeanne obtains his cure, Vol. II., p. 288.

MIRON (Bishop). Named Archbishop of Lyons, Vol. I., p. 77. First opposition to the Order, Vol. I., p. 78. First interview with Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 78. Recognizes the truth of her mission, Vol. I., p. 80. Presses the erection of the Order, Vol. I., p. 83. Jeanne warns him of his approaching death, Vol. I., p. 84. His death, Vol. I., p. 84.

MORIN (Father). Charged to examine Jeanne's mission, Vol. I., p. 79. Supports the application for the bull for Paris, Vol. I., p. 96.

MORTIFICATION. Early spirit of mortification in Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 14. Perseveres even in her tepidity, Vol. I., p. 19. Her exercises of mortification, Vol. I., p. 46. See Vol. II., Book VII., chs. 10 and 11.

MYSTICISM. Inconsequence of those who reject it, Vol. I. p. 254.

TEARS. Jeanne receives the gift of tears, Vol. I., p. 32. The baldric of tears, Vol. I., p. 100. Their value, Vol. II., p. 144. Tears of the Saints, Vol. II., p. 170. Their eulogy, Vol. II., p. 182. The gift of tears, Vol. II., p. 208.

TEMPTATIONS. Jeanne's in youth, Vol. I., p. 21. Their nature, Vol. II., p. 167.

THEOLOGY. Divinely communicated to her, Vol. I., p. 15. See Vol. I., Book IV. Her spiritual theology. See Vol. II., Book VII., ch. 3.

THERESA (Saint). Sisterly interest, Vol. I., p. 359.

THOMAS (Apostle). Jeanne's devotion to, Vol. I., p. 349.

THOU (De). Jeanne warned of the conspiracy, Vol. I., p. 163. Reassured of his salvation, Vol. I., p. 165.

TREASURER. (Économe.) Her charge, Vol. II., p. 6.

TRINITY (Holy). Inclines to Jeanne and dwells in her, Vol. I., p. 42. Baptizes and regenerates her, Vol. I., p. 56. Her theological views on the mystery. See Vol. I., Book IV., ch. 2. An image of the religious life, Vol. II., p. 7. Jeanne's homage to, Vol. II., p. 232.

URBAN VIII. Jeanne asks and obtains for him a prolonged life, Vol. II., p. 287.

URSULA (Saint). Encourages the foundress, Vol. I., p. 358.

URSULE (Mother St.). Her kindness to the daughters of the Incarnate Word in the last days of the Convent of Paris, Vol. II., Book VI., ch. 4.

VEDÉNE (Madame de). Her friendship for the Order, Vol. I., p. 139.

VERPINIÉRE (Sister de la). Elected Superior of the Convent of Paris, Vol. II., p. 104.

VILLARD (Sister Mary Margaret Gibalin du). Preparation for her vocation, Vol. I., p. 122. Sent to Paris, Vol. I., p. 126. Chosen Superior of first convent, Vol. I., p. 137. Arrival in Avignon, Vol. I , p. 138. A little difference with Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 142. Her humble submission, Vol. I., p. 143. Apparition of Blessed Virgin, Vol. I., p. 143. How Jeanne tests her humility, Vol. I., p. 151. She takes the vows, Vol. I., p. 156. How she governs the convent, Vol. I., p. 172. Apparition of Child Jesus, Vol. I., p. 173.

VILLARD (Sister Helen Gibalin du). Enters the Order, Vol. I., p. 122. Placed at the head of the house at Lyons, Vol. I., p. 184. Goes to Avignon, Vol. I., p. 199. Named Superior at Paris, Vol. II., p. 73.

VINCENT DE PAUL (Saint). Known by Mother de Matel, Vol. I., p. 209.

VIRGIN (The Blessed). Her part in the first design of the Order, Vol. I., p. 57. Constituted its mother and queen, Vol. I., p. 107. Appears to Mother Mary Margaret, Vol. I., p. 143. Obtains for De Thou the grace of a happy death, Vol. I., p. 165. Figures of her greatness, Vol. I., p. 273. Jeanne's views of her, her grandeur, mission, etc. See Vol. I., Book IV., ch. 5. Her sorrows, Vol. I., p. 316. Immaculate Conception, Vol. I., p. 317. Satan defeated in that mystery, Vol. II., p. 146. Jesus Christ the seal of Mary, Vol. II., p. 153. Mary His shepherdess, Vol. II., p. 155. Her candor, Vol. II., p. 156.

VIRGINITY. Jeanne's love for it as a child, Vol. I., p. 14. The idea that Our Lord gives of it, Vol. I., p. 133.

VIRTUES (of Mother de Matel). See Vol. II., Book VII.

VISIONS. Vision of the crown of thorns, Vol. I., p. 50. Of the column and compass, Vol. I., p. 51. Of spiritual baptism, Vol. I., p. 52. Of the chapel, statue, etc., Vol. I., p. 54. Of the three chalices, rod and the three crowns, Vol. I., p. 55. Of the chalice of flowers, Vol. I., p. 56. Of the twelve tongues of flame and twelve doors, Vol. I., p. 56. Of the Ecce Homo, Vol. I., p. 62. The fold without a door, the sheep without a shepherdess, Vol. I., p. 64. Of the crown and doves, Vol. I., p. 64. Of the crown of the scapular, Vol. I., p. 67. Of Our Lord in the Ostensorium, Vol. I., p. 68. Of the picture, sun and Notre Dame de Puy, Vol. I., p. 69. Of the dolphin on the beach, Vol. I., p. 77. Of Mount Gourgillon, Vol. I., p. 81. Of the wine press, Vol. I., p. 91. Of St. Michael, St. Denis and St. Jerome, Vol. I., p. 98. Of the baldric of tears, Vol. I., p. 100. Of the lambs of Father Carré, Vol. I., p. 102. Of the heaven covered with manna, Vol. I., p. 105. Of the temple and city, Vol. I., p. 114 Of the flame and rose tree, Vol. I., page 120. Of the garland of sapphire and stars, Vol. I., p. 134. Of the wonderful trumpets, Vol. I., p. 134. Of the heart of Jesus in the form of a rose, Vol. I., p. 145. Of the tiara, Vol. I., p. 155. Of St. Denis officiating, Vol. I., p. 181. Of the two golden keys, Vol. I., p. 186. Of the instruments of

RICHELIEU (Cardinal Archbishop). His opposition to Jeanne and to her Order, Vol. I., p. 109. Refuses Father Millien, Vol. I., p. 114. His severity when starting for Rome, Vol. I., p. 116. Another refusal, Vol. I., p. 128. Visits the convent at Lyons and seizes the papers of Mother de Matel, Vol. I., p. 159. Recognizes their truth, Vol. I., p. 162. Persists in his opposition, Vol. I., p. 162. Regrets it when dying, Vol. I., p. 213. Jeanne's prediction concerning him, Vol. II., p. 314. He appears to her after death, Vol. II., p. 316.

ROANNE. Jeanne born there, Vol. I., p. 7. Reception on her passage in 1653, Vol. I., p. 218. Same in 1658, Vol. II., p. 66. Jeanne's blessing on the city, Vol. II., p. 68.

ROCHEGUYON (Duchess de la). Wishes to be foundress, Vol. I., p. 98. Her proposition, Vol. I., p. 137. Presents Mary Margaret to Anne of Austria, Vol. I., p. 137. Receives Jeanne and daughters in her house, Vol. I., p. 182. Can not become foundress, Vol. I., p. 188.

ROSSIGNOL (M. and Madame de). Receive the Community during the blockade of Paris, Vol. I., p. 203. Jeanne's influence on his sanctification, Vol. II., p. 217. Their action at her death, Vol. II., p. 123.

ROUX (Father). His conversion to the Order, Vol. I., p. 131.

RULE. See OBEDIENCE.

SACRIFICE. Spirit of, Vol. II., p. 173.

SACRAMENT (Blessed). M. de Belly's love of, Vol. I., p. 150. Thoughts on the Blessed Sacrament. See Vol. I., Book IV., ch. 4. The model of the religious life, Vol. II., p. 9. The consecration compared to a catch of fish, Vol. II., p. 152. The Eucharist a relic, Vol. II., p. 152. Jesus Christ a pilgrim, Vol. II., p. 154. Jeanne's devotion to Blessed Sacrament, Vol. II. p. 235.

SACRAMENT (Daughters of the Holy). Establishment of their Order, Vol. I. p. 99. They fail to unite with the Order of the Incarnate Word, Vol. I., p. 100.

SADNESS. What Jeanne thought of it, Vol. II., p. 17.

SALVADOR (M. de). His part in the erection of the Convent of Avignon, Vol. I., p. 141.

SANCTITY. Jeanne's idea of, Vol. I., p. 255. Way of the Saints. Vol. II., p. 169.

SATAN. See DEMON.

SCARRON (Bishop) of Grenoble. Good will towards Jeanne and the Order, Vol. I., p. 170.

SCRIPTURE (Holy). Supernatural knowledge of, Vol. I., p. 31. A means of Divine Communication, Vol. I., p. 31. Writings of Jeanne rich in, Vol. II., p. 147.

SEGUIER (Chancellor). First interview with Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 165. His veneration for her, Vol. I., p. 166. He asks her to suppress the Convent of Lyons, Vol. I., p. 198. Contributes to its foundation, Vol. I., p. 223. His esteem of her writings, Vol. II., p. 143. Saved from danger by invoking her, Vol. II., p. 288. She predicts his elevation, Vol. II., p. 311.

SEPARATION. Supernatural separation of her mind and soul, Vol. I., p. 40.

SERVIÈRES (M. and Madame de). Jeanne's letter concerning their daughter, Vol. I., p. 156. Their children cured through her prayers, Vol. II., p. 227. Predicts the birth of a second daughter, Vol. II., p. 313.

SIN. Its grievousness, Vol. I., p. 270; Vol. II., p. 168.

SLEEP (Spiritual). Mystic, frequent in life of Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 242.

SISTERS (Little, of Child Jesus). Their institution, Vol. I., p. 151. Miss de Serviéres the first one, Vol. II., p. 313.

SISTERS (of Jeanne de Matel). Opposed to her vocation, Vol. I., p. 69.

SOLITUDE. Her love of silence and solitude, Vol. I., p. 44. Spirit of recollection and solitude, Vol. I., p. 51.

SOREL (Mother). Her entry into religion, Vol. I., p. 180. Elected Superior of the house in Paris, Vol. II., p. 92. Her administration and character, Vol. II., p. 93. Returns to Grenoble, Vol. II., p. 94.

SOUL (of Jesus). Vol. I., p. 282.

SPIRIT (Holy). Gift of Holy Spirit as consoler, Vol. I., p. 56. Jeanne offered to Him by Blessed Virgin, Vol. I., p. 57. Her homage to him, Vol. II., p. 233.

SPIRIT (of Mother de Matel). See Book VII.

SUFFERINGS. Also see TRIALS. Sufferings of Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 40.

SUPERIOR. Her image, Vol. II., p. 6. Obligations, Vol. II., p. 18.

SUSPENSIONS. See RAPTURES and ECSTACY.

the Passion, Vol. I., p. 190. Of the mysterious repose, Vol. I., p. 190. Of the opening in the heart and the crowns, Vol. I., p. 191. Of the divine shepherdess, Vol. I., p. 215. The dove and the eagle, Vol. I., page 237. Of the incarnation, Vol. I., p. 238. Of the lamb leaping, in the forest, immolated, Vol. I., p. 240. The heart and the lily, Vol. I., p. 241. Of the couch and the golden chains of contemplation, Vol. I., p. 246. Of the pit of divine science, Vol. I., p. 256. Of the Sacred Humanity and the tent, Vol. I., p. 272. Of the fountain with silver tubes, Vol. I., p. 273. Of the divine mother, Vol. I., p. 285. Of the sea, the fisherman and the jewel, Vol. I., p. 321. Of the repast of blood and milk, Vol. II., p. 36. Of the temple and key, Vol. II., p. 192. Of bearing the cross, Vol. II., p. 194. Of the white carpet, Vol. II., p. 204. Of the altar and the beheaded, Vol. II., p. 207. Of the bow and the thunder, Vol. II., p. 214. Of the ship, Vol. II., p. 215. Of the veil and the snares of love, Vol. II., p. 238. Of the heart and the bowels on fire, Vol. II., p. 245. Of Cardinal Richelieu, Vol. II., p. 316. Of the luminous sword, Vol. II., p. 323. Of Henry IV., Vol. II., p. 328.

VOCATION. How the demon attacked that of Jeanne, Vol. I., p. 70.

VOWS. Jeanne the object of a vow before her birth, Vol. I., p. 7. Solemnization of the first vows, Vol. I., p. 119. Effects of the vows, Vol. II., p. 2.

WAR. First civil war under Anne's regency, Vol. I., p. 202. Second civil war, Vol. I., p. 213. Jeanne intervenes by prayer, Vol. II., p. 320.

WORD INCARNATE. (Jesus Christ.) Views on the Incarnate Word. See Vol. I., Book IV., ch. 3. The model of the religious life, Vol. II., p. 7. His Resurrection, Vol. II., p. 149. His stay in the desert, Vol. II., p. 150. He bears the just and sinners, Vol. II., p. 153. Pilgrim in the Eucharist, phœnix on the cross, Vol. II., p. 154. How he catches souls, Vol. II., p. 166.

WORD INCARNATE (Order of.) For the establishment and different foundations, see index, and names in this table of contents. The name given by our Lord, Vol. I., p. 52. Why the establishment was so contradicted, Vol. I., p. 55. A special school of perfection,

Vol. II., p. 10. Character, constitution, spirit. See Vol. II., Book V., ch. 2. Love of Jeanne for her daughters, Vol. II., p. 220. Their vocation, education of girls, Vol. II., p. 224. The Order at the Revolution, Vol. II., Book VIII., ch. 1. Its restoration, Vol. II., Book VIII., ch. 3. Houses in 1882, Vol. II., p. 368.

WOUNDS (of Love). Frequent phenomenon in Jeanne's life, Vol. I., p. 243.

WRITINGS (of Mother de Matel). See Vol. II., Book VII., ch. 2. The Cardinal at Lyons seizes them, Vol. I., p. 159. Recognizes their truth, Vol. I., p. 162. They are returned, Vol. I., p. 219.

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